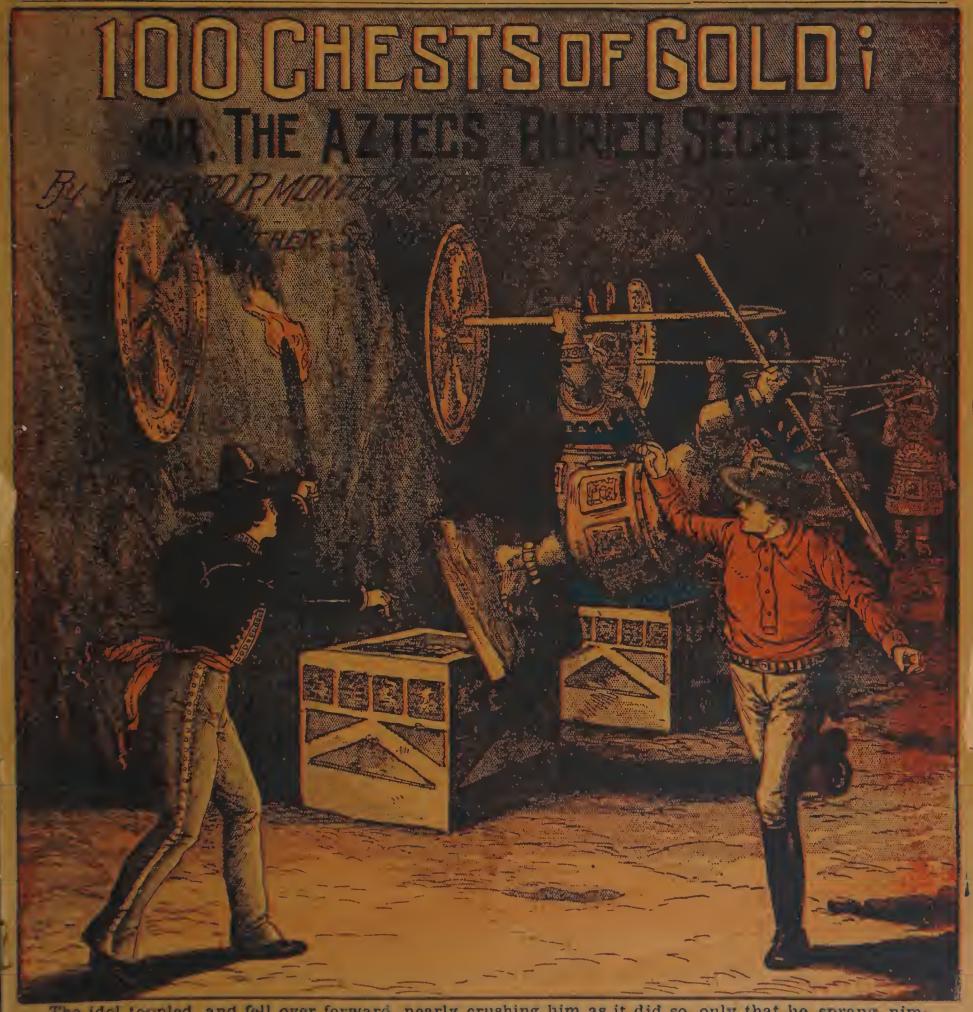
COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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No. 1081.

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The idol toppled, and fell over forward, nearly crushing him as it did so, only that he sprang nimbly to one side in time to avoid it. "Look!" cried Clarita excitedly, and pointing toward the spot where the image had stood.



PLUCK AND LUCK

STORIES OF ADVENTURE

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100 CHESTS OF GOLD

THE AZTECS' BURIED SECRET

By RICHARD R. MONTGOMERY

CHAPTER I.

THE WARNING.

The day was just drawing to a close, and every rock and tree was tipped with the golden halo of the setting sun.

The breeze whispering softly among the branches and hissing defiantly past the cactus thorns, bore forward the sound of a horse's hoofs upon the beaten trail that stretched away toward the Sierra Madres, and presently both horse and rider came into view from behind one of the huge boulders that bordered the path.

They were striking in appearance, and worthy of careful

observation.

The rider was a young man of dark complexion and flashing black eyes, and his shapely lips were partially hidden by a small mustache of the hue of ebony, which gave him the appearance of being older than he really was, for he had but just passed his nineteenth birthday.

He was a broad-shouldered, deep-chested young fellow, and

sat his horse as though they were one.

At first glance Paul Pemberton might have been mistaken for a Mexican, owing to his almost swarthy complexion, and the costume he wore, which was a happy agglomeration of the habit of the sister republics, but he was nevertheless a genuine American boy, "all wool and a yard wide," as his friends had often said of him.

He wore the Mexica: coat and breeches. The former was profusely embroidered with gold lace, and the latter trimmed up and down the sides with silver coins. A broad-brimmed Chihuahua hat, often mistaken for a genuine Mexican sombrero, and a pair of American riding-boots, completed the tout ensemble, while from beneath the folds of a short sash about his waist neeped the hilts of two trusty six-shooters.

Paul was evidently lost in thought, for he did not notice the queer figure which seemed to be awaiting him upon the flat top of a huge rock, until he was startled out of his day cram by the man's voice.

"Oiga, senor!" it said sharply, and in a tone that broke for Paul's meditations like the crack of a pistol. He pulled his horse up with a jerk, while his hand flew like lightning

The veapon was not drawn, however, for the strange being tood before him with hands widely extended, and was evi-

o are ou?" demanded Paul, shortly, and in Spanish, and in the situation, and a half smile flitted be by plance of a sunbeam through his eyes as they rested men the tunted, mi hapen figure before him, who, as if to of the selection appearance which he made, wore a tall, ecool cap spon his head. He was not over five feet a selection of the control of the

r t re soile n our face tell me you are scoffing

apologize, senor, for that would be a useless waste of time

"What do you want?" asked Paul. "Please be quick, for I

am in a hurry."
"There is no necessity for haste," replied the dwarf, "as you will have seven days in which to take your departure."
"I will have—— Eh, what did you say?"

"Senor," said the dwarf deliberately, and at the same time squatting like a Turk upon the rock. "I have been waiting

here for more than an hour for the purpose of warning you."
"Warning me! Of what?"
"Of a plot against you and your friends—a plot to either drive you from the Caballito Mine or to bury you there."
"Ah," murmured Paul, stroking his mustache. "Who chertshes this 'friendly disposition' toward may and my friends?"

ishes this 'friendly disposition' toward me and my friends?" "Be assured that it is one who can and will carry it out."
"Yourself, perhaps?"

"Even so."

"Ah! You have not yet told me who you are, hence I do what your warning is worth heeding." not know whether or not your warning is worth heeding. Will you tell me your name?"

"Rubio."

"Rubio! You?"

Paul Pemberton had asked for the dwarf's name, little dreaming what his reply would be; and when he heard it he could not help doubting its truth.

Rubio! A warning from him was worthy of attention at least, and most men would respect and heed it; but Paul was made of that kind of bravery which is commonly termed recklessness, and while he felt that the situation deserved serious thought, he was not to be frightened away by a shadow. That Rubio was a desperate character, a relentless outlaw, a fugitive from justice with a price upon his head, a man cordially feared and hated by every American in Mexico, he well knew; and the young man had often congratulated himself that his friends and the outlaw had never come in contact, when suddenly he found himself figuratively "held up" on the road, and commanded to leave the country and the mine he and his friends had located, within seven days, or be killed; and strangest of all, the man who gave him the warning, who

ordered him away, proclaimed himself to be Rubio in person.
All the different bearings of the situation flitted quickly through Paul Pemberton's brain with the speed of telegraphy,

for with scarcely a perceptible pause, he added:

"Will you make your warning more explicit, Senor Rubio?" "Certainly," replied the dwarf. "You and your friends are located at La Mina Caballito, an exhausted and abandoned It is within my domain, and while I had no use for it, I allowed you to remain there unmolested; but now I desire to resume possession of my property, and I have accosted you on the road for the purpose of commanding you to depart.

"Commanding?"

"Aye, commanding! Did I not say that the mine is a part of my domain?"

"But the mine has been properly denounced, and I hold the government's license to work it.'

"Bah!" exclaimed Rubio, contemptuously. "A fig for the government and its license!"

"It gives me a right to the property, nevertheless," re-

marked Paul, dryly.
"Don Paulo," said Rubio, rising once more to his feet, "it is useless for us to bandy words, or to argue the merits of an official paper, for I, Rubio, recognize no government but my own will, nor any paper but that bearing my signature. The property of which we are speaking is minc-by the right of force, if you will accept no other; and I command you to deliver it up."

"And if I refuse?"
"You and your friends will be killed."

"By your orders?"
"Even so. There is one way in which you can remain and have my protection, however."

"Ah, there is. What is that, pray?"

"By paying me two hundred dollars each month."

Paul smiled when the proposition was made him, for it was precisely what he had been told would happen to him ere he had been long in Mexico—that is, that the bandits would demand a stated revenue of him, or drive him from the country; and he had sworn he would neither pay nor be driven out.

"It is not the mine you want, Senor Rubio, so much as the monthly tribute?"

"Even so."

"You know that the mine is practically played out, do you not?"

"Quien sabe?" with a shrug of his huge shoulders. "You are evidently there for something, and if the mine were worthless, you would not remain. Is is not true?"
"Quien sabe? as you say," returned Paul, laughing a little.
"But don't you think it is rather hard on me to drive me

out of the country, or force me to pay more than I can afford?"

"You must pay the tribute or go."

"And you give me seven days to decide which I will do?"
"Even so, senor. At the expiration of seven days from this hour you must either meet me at this spot, prepared to pay

me the first two hundred dollars, or you must have left the country."

"And if I fail in both instances I and my friends will be slaughtered—murdered by you and your band. Is it so?"

"It is senor."

Paul Pemberton made a quick movement, and before the outlaw had time to think what it meant, one of the young man's six-shooters was pointed directly at his heart.

Rubio started a little, and then calmly raised his hands over his head, as Paul sternly inquired:
"What is to hinder my killing you now, and thus ending this business?"

The outlaw's lips parted and a strange piercing whistle came from between them. Then with his hands still raised

over his head, he remarked calmly:

"Nothing whatever, senor; but if you will take the trouble to look around you, I think you will conclude to return your

weapon to your belt and accept my terms.

There was a peculiar meaning smile on the outlaw's face as he spoke, which scemed to earry conviction with it, and Paul Pemberton, relaxing for the moment his usual caution, followed the suggestion of Rubio and looked around him.

With an exclamation of great astonishment, he realized what the bandit chieftain's words had meant.

Surrounding him upon all sides, and each with a rifle aimed directly at his heart, were fully a score of men, half concealed behind boulders and bushes and cactus.

Not a word had been spoken, but in obcdience to their chieftain's whistle the men had silently arisen as if from the bowels of the earth, each with his deadly rifle pointing at the American boy's heart.

It was an appalling moment. Pemberton was equal to the emergency, for, quickly returning his revolver to its place,

emergency, for, quickly returning his revolver to its place, he coolly remarked:

"The odds are too great, Senor Rubio. I believe I still have seven days in which to think over your proposal?"

"You have," replied Rubio, waving his hand, at which the heads and shoulders and rifles sank out of sight as completely as though the earth had swallowed them up.

"In the meantime what am I to expect?"

"Nothing. You will be unmolested."

"Bueno!" and Paul tightened the reins, causing his horse to start ahead.

He turned in his saddle and raising his sombrero, politely

"Alios, Senor Rubio, for seven long days."

CHAPTER II.

THE BURIED SECRET.

A slight word was all that the beautiful black stallion needed, and he dashed away down the trail with the speed of the wind toward La Mina Carballito, where our hero, and

s friends had been located for the past six months.

The party consisted of four young men ranging from eighteen to twenty-one years of age, who, with the well-known grit and pluck of the average American youth, had joined with Paul Pemberton in the hazardous scheme he had undertaken, and altogether they were a resolute and determined

quintette.

A brief glance at the several causes which led to the presence of these five brave fellows in the wild mountain regions of the state of Durango, Mexico, will serve to make us better acquainted with their characteristics, and help us in appreciating the adventures they met with during their unrelenting search. Adventures which, could they have foreseen them all, would never have happened, for the bravest of Paul Pemberton's pals would have remained at home rather than face the events of the following year

could they have been foretold.

About a year previous to the time of the interview between Rubio and Paul the latter had been traveling through Mexico alone, and late one afternoon he had come upon one of those monuments of Spanish idolatry—a solitary church—perched upon the top of a small mountain, with not

a sign of human habitation in sight.

He was hungry and tired, and he quickly resolved to seek his night's shelter in the old church, instead of endeavoring to reach the next hacienda, which was several leagues farther, and accordingly after a tiresome ascent, he found himself at the portal.

It was deserted. Not a sound or sign replied to his call, and dismounting, he soon found a means of entrance, and discovered that he had by chance hit upon one of the very few places of worship which had not been sacked and pillaged

when the Spaniards were ordered out of Mexico.

There was the beautiful fresco work upon the ceilings, the rich and costly paintings on the walls, the chancel-rail of solid silver, worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, the carved and gilded confessionals, and the gorgeous sunlight streaming through the stained glass windows, glorifying the brow of the sleeping infant in the manger at Bethlehem, and the tender face of the mother Mary bending over it-the Ma-

donna of some forgotten artist painted upon the altar.

Paul stood silent as he gazed upon the soft beauty of the cathedral; the rich coloring on every hand; paused, and instinctively fell upon his knees before a silver crucifix, breathing a silent prayer and thanksgiving within the walls that

had been devoid of echo for years and years.

His saddle-bags furnished him with food, and a spring under the altar of the church quenched the thirst of both man and horse; and then the young traveler began to inspect his surroundings more closely.

The prehistoric races of America—the Aztecs, Toltecs, Tlascalans, and other races of Mexico—had furnished an inexhaustible fund of study and research for him at college, and he was never tired of endeavoring to decipher some Mexican hieroglyphic, which had perhaps puzzled the shrcwdest scientist. College finished, he had cagerly sought the land of those mysterious races who wrote so graphically with their strange crude pictures, and was just returning from the site of an old Aztec city when night overtook him at the deserted chureli.

Everything about the place looked as though it had been described at a moment's notice, and the dry air of Mexico, together with the bright sun daily streaming through the win-

dows, had preserved everything in perfect order.

As Paul looked more closely at the stone flooring he was several times struck by strange figures upon them, and, upon stooping and examining them more closely, found that they were Aztec hieroglyphics.

"Can it be that this church is creeted upon the sight of an

Active temple?" he thought, searching ergerly for more, that each chest may be purified, one hundred human sacriHe was right, as a careful inspection soon proved, for he fices have been rendered up; one hundred worshipers of gold
cond many Actee carvings in different places about the canave been slain." rectal, some of which were familiar to him, and which he ready deciphered, and others which he could not under-

Thus, was lering about and becoming more and more in-terested as he proceeded, he at last ascended the chancel steps and passed behind the altar. There he found a large, square stone, upon which was carved the figure of a huge bird

searing away with a snake in its beak.

"By crawling under rocks ye may soar on high," he murmured, translating the picture before him; and, looking about curiously, he concluded that he was at that moment standing upon the floor of the original Aztec temple, probably erected a thousand years before, a part of which the Spaniards had utilized in building their own place of worship when they erected so many of them during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Many of the stones were loose in the floor, the cement having crumbled, and with his knife he began working around

the edges of the stone containing the bird picture.

The work was begun methodically, almost without thought, but he presently became interested in it, and soon had the stone entirely loose from the others. Then, securing a wedge, he worked it into the crack, and by degrees removed the stone from its resting-place of many centuries.

A compartment of about two feet square and equally deep was revealed, and lying upon the bottom was a roll that re-

sembled parchment.

With a glad cry he seized the roll and took it from its

resting-place, replacing the stone where he had found it.
With a match from his pocket, Paul lighted several of the candles that were about the altar, and proceeded to examine his prize.

When entirely unrolled, the parchment measured nearly thirty feet in length, and was covered with pictures and fig-

ures of all sizes and descriptions.

At one end was a hand pointing upward, and at the other was the figure of a man in the garb of a high priest of the sun worshipers, while scattered about him in confusion, and yet forming a complete circle, were what appeared to be a numberless metal-bound chests, and at each chest was the

figure of a man in a position denoting worship.

Along the parchment, in different positions, were representations of the flights of birds, the rising and setting of the

sun occurring at frequent intervals.

Paul's familiarity with Aztec picture-writing led him to at once conjecture that the parchment was descriptive of a journey, and congratulating himself upon having found something valuable to science, he put the scroll in his saddle-bags,

and finding a comfortable place, went to sleep.

Many days of fatiguing travel followed, and although he frequently thought of it, the parchinent was not again unrolled until he was in his home in the north.

Then he went to work to decipher it.

I will not weary the reader with an account of his many weeks of close study before he had succeeded in unraveling the secrets of the strange document, but the following is a correct copy of Paul Pemberton's translation of the Aztec parchment which he had found under the altar of the de-Aztec s rted church,

"I, a most high priest of the god Ixcauxtl, have this day completed the tribute demanded by him for the last war (or better). The one bundredth chest has been filled with gold, and they have one by one been consigned to the hiding place de ignated. For him who succeedeth me as most high priest, hould be have need theerof, let him follow the eagle for three full nights from the coming up of the sun until its going down, diagonally to the right of the setting sun (northweet), and then let him pause. Then let him face three-quarters about, and follow along a canyon in the mountains one eagle'. flight and until the sun setteth—until he emergeth upon a plateau surrounded by mountains and have ing to entrance.—the canyon at one side and the river correfrom the higher mountains at the other. In this prican (or elevated vally) of the length and breadth of one light, are concealed the one hundred chests of gold, in a ca ern rade by the war god. In the center of the plateau a tore the that which covereth this scroll, and beneath

Paul had studied it over and over, and the more he studied the more convinced he became that his translation was correct; that he had only to return to the deserted church, and by following the directions given in the parchment find the hidden treasure, and thus become possessed of the one hundred chests of gold.

But he had no thought of going alone. That would be useless, and he determined to select four of the most trusty and

reliable companions, and ask them to accompany him.

Thus it happened that one morning just six months before the time when our story opens, Paul Pemberton accompanied by Harry De Forest, Will Lovel, Charlie King and Jim Mc-Lallen, all magnificently mounted and armed, and followed by three Mexican servants and a drove of laden burros, had issued from the canyon upon the hidden plateau so completely surrounded by impassable mountains, as described in the Aztec parchment translated by Paul.

They were all five sworn friends and companions, and had been so from boyhood, and when they had been made acquainted with the contents of the document found by Paul, and asked to accompany him, they had, without a dissenting

voice, joined with him in this habzardous undertaking.
In the valley, near the mouth of the river-course (the second entrance spoken of in the parchment) was an abandoned, worked-out Spanish mine, and near it the adventurous young men had erected their tents and settled; and it was toward this camp that our hero was hastening when he left Rubio in the trail above.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECRET BALLOT TREACHERY.

"Boys," cried Paul, dashing up to where his companions were lounging about, some reading, and all impatiently awaiting the meal under process of preparation by the Mexican servants, "I have news for you."

"Have you found the arrow?" cried Harry De Forest, while

they all sprang to their feet in eager expectancy.
"No," replied Paul. "I have not even looked for it to-day,

as you all know; but I have found something else."

"What?" asked Jim McLallen, dryly, "your appetite?"

"Yes," laughed Paul, "and more, too; I have been held up on the trail, about three miles out of the valley, by that rascal Rubio.

"Rubio!"

The boys echoed the name in astonishment.

They had been warned that he and his band of outlaws would not allow them to remain in the mountains long without paying tribute, but they had been there so long without hearing anything of him that they had almost forgotten his name; but now that Paul had been accosted by him, the terrible stories they had heard of the bandit's atrocities came back to them emphatically

"Yes, Rubio," repeated Paul, "and he has given us seven

days in which to get out of the country, or——"
"Or what?" asked Charlie King.
"We may remain," continued Paul, "by paying Rubio a monthly revenue of two hundred dollars."

"Suppose we choose to remain without paying, what then?" asked Will Lovel, who seldom spoke, and who, on account of his pronounced obstinacy, had been nicknamed Buck by his companions.

"Why, in that case he says we will all be killed," answered

For a few moments all were silent, each proceeding quietly with his meal, which had been begun as soon as Paul had arrived.

Not another word was spoken until Buck Lovell, having finished his supper, threw himself flat upon the grass, and gazing up at the stars which were beginning to appear, broke silence.

"Well, Paul," he said, "tell us of what you are thinking. and then let us consult together as to what is best to be

Paul Pemberton arose to his feet and looked earnestly ne row which points directly toward the one his companions. He was something over six feet in height, and built in proportions. He looked as he stood there the emport of the bodiment of manly power and grace, capable in every way of being the leader of a much larger band than the one which

he had with him at that moment.
"Boys," he said, speaking in a moderate yet emphatic way, and using a low tone intended only for their ears, "I brought you here upon what many called a wild-goose chase; but we found the church—though desecrated and robbed since I had visited it—and by carefully following the directions which I deciphered from the old parchment, reached this spot, which is beyond doubt the valley referred to in the document.

"It is now six months since we camped here first, and as yet we have found no traces of the stone underneath which lies the directing arrow, although we have searched diligently and unceasingly for it, not a single day having elapsed since we came when one or more of us were not prosecuting

the search.

"The stone remains undiscovered. The arrow which is to point out the way to the hidden treasure is apparently as far away from our ken as when we were in our northern homes.

"To-day, while returning through the upper canyon, I was held up and commanded to leave the country, or pay tribute to a scoundrel named Rubio, who says we are trespassing upon his domain, and who threatens to kill us all if we do not

obey.
"Now there are several courses open for our selection.
"Now there are several days and then leave, with "One is to remain the seven days and then leave, with or without having found the treasure; another is to remain and pay what this bandit demands; a third is to give up the search now, as useless, and leave in the morning; and the fourth, and last, is to stay and not pay, and defy this outlaw chieftain and his band, who outnumber us ten to one, and who know every rock and turn of these mountain canyons, and the locality of every boulder large enough to conceal the body of a man.

"They are armed with carbines, and we are armed with Spencer rifles, which shoot sixteen times without reloading."

He ceased speaking, and gazed earnestly at the upturned

faces before him.

"I leave it all with you," he added, "as to which of the four courses we adopt. Either of the first three are safe ones, while should the fourth be selected, it will bring upon us a perpetual and deadly warfare with Rubio and his band, out of which we cannot all expect to escape alive; perhaps none

"I have thought the matter carefully over," he continued, after another short pause, "and I have concluded that the best and fairest way of deciding this question is by secret ballot.

"I will place my hat upon the ground behind the tent, and one by one you can go to it; those who favor the fourth and last course will drop a cartridge in it, and those who favor any one of the other three will drop in a coin, and each one is expected to stand upright when he casts his vote, that he may not see how the one who preceded him voted.
"I will now place my hat behind the tent, leaving my own

ballot in it as I do so.

Amid profound silence Paul strode away in the darkness,

and disappeared behind the tent.

Not a sound could be heard, save an occasional exclamation from the Mexicans over their game of monte, by the fire-light, or the stamp of a horse's hoof upon the solid earth.

In a moment more Paul returned hatless, and rejoined the

group, motioning Buck to go and cast his vote.

Presently he returned, and Jim went next, and so one by

one they disappeared behind the tent, to reappear again with solemn faces, that had in them a newborn firmness.

"Now, Buck," said Paul, when they had all returned, after having dropped their votes in the hat, "you and Jim go together and bring the hat to me; we will then look in it together."

Thus commanded, the two addressed went for the repository of the votes, and in a moment more it was on the ground in front of Paul Pemberton.

Striking a waxen match he held it down closely over the hat, while they all bent forward eagerly to see what it contained.

With one unanimous cry of pleasure they grasped each other's hand in a hearty clasp.

The hat contained five cartridges. The hat contained five cartridges. Thank you, boys, said Paul, simply, but with a throb of pride and satisfaction in his tones. I knew how you would vote, and yet I feared; but had you all put in coins I should have stuck to my cartridge alone, for I will not return to be laughed at by the skeptics at home, nor will I ever turn a ide from an undertaking which I have set out to accomplish."

"We have seven days before the music begins." remarked Harry, "and I think we had better employ that time in preparing to receive Mr. Rubio with due ceremony.

"I have an idea," suddenly exclaimed Will Lovel, who had

been dreaming as usual.
"What is it?" asked Paul, quietly, for he thoroughly appreciated Buck's clear head and cool determination.

"This," returned Buck, rapidly, now that he had formed his idea into shape. "We brought with us several small kegs of blasting powder, thinking that they might prove necessary. Very well; with one of them we can blow up that leaning wall about a quarter of a mile down the lower canyon, and thus form a complete barricade there, so that there will be absolutely no means of entrance and exit to and from this valley except by the upper canyon."

"That is what an army officer would call cutting off from the base of supplies," muttered Harry.

"A good idea, though," said Jim.

"Capital," echoed the others.

"When the time comes for us to leave here, we will be obliged to find our way over the mountains instead of re-

obliged to find our way over the mountains instead of returning the way we came if we do that," said Charlie.

"Very true," replied Buck, gravely. "But we may as well understand now that if we remain in this valley a week longer we will never leave it unless we or the government have exterminated Rubio and his gang."

"It may be for years and it may be forever," hummed Jim, dolefully. "Anyhow, fellows, there is enough to eat here. The valley is full of game and there are plenty of springs of good water."

good water."

"Two of our members must be constantly on guard while the remaining three are prosecuting the search and resting,

remarked Paul thoughtfully.

"Friends," he added, in a moment more, "I have been, through courtesy more than anything else, the leader of this party heertofore. I shall from this time on assume absolute command, and expect implicit obedience. Shall I have it?"

"You shall!" they responded, as with one voice.

"Very well. I will now issue my first orders.

"In my absoration of disability was will lead through Problem.

"In my absence or disability you will look upon Buck as your leader. To-morrow morning Buck and Harry will reconnoiter near the leaning wall in the lower canyon for a good spot for the blast. Charlie will remain near camp and continue the search for the stone and arrow, while Jim and I will gallop up the upper canyon in search of the most advantageous point of defense—a point which two of our number could hold. I think I know such a spot, but I wish to study it more carefully than I have done."
"How about the succeeding days?" asked Charlie, who did

not relish his part of the programme.

"They will be differently arranged, of course," replied Paul.
"Now turn in, boys, and sleep soundly, for we have seven days before any one will molest us; but, then, mind you, we will need all our nerve and all our perseverance in order to succeed.

"Of one thing I am resolved," he continued, impressively, in this valley or I will leave it having found the one hundred chests of gold." "and that is this: either I, Paul Pemberton, will end my days

Exchanging hearty "good-nights," they entered the tents,

and presently they were one and all sound asleep.

But had they been vigilant they would have seen the figure of one of their Mexican servants rise from a little hollow in the ground near where they had been talking, and steal silently away in the darkness, soon falling into that rapid monotonous trot for which the Mexican Indians are notorious.

A half-hour's travel brought him to the mouth of the upper-

canyon, where he paused and gave a low whistle

It was instantly answered, and from behind a huge boulder appeared the figure of the dwarfed bandit chieftain, Rubio.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BANDIT'S PLOT.

"You are late," was the first remark made by Rubio, as he stepped out to meet the treacherous servant of the American boys who had come to the mouth of the canyon to meet him. He spoke in the Spanish tongue, although both could con-

verse fluently in English when they chose.
"I could not avoid it, senor," replied the servant, whose name was Juan, and who was an officer in Rubio's command.

Were right in supposing your announcement to-day ing thoroughly secure from being observed or overheard, spoke in an ordinary tone.

*Ah!" puttered Rubio; "they will fly, of course?"

No senor."
"No?" subbing his hands together gleefully. "It is better me—Rubio than I hoped. They will then pay tribute to me—Rubio—

No. senor."

"What! Do they defy—me—me!"

"Si, senor.

The bandit chieftain was too much astonished to speak for a moment, but taking his companion by the arm, he drew him behind the boulder from whence he had emerged a moment

"Come," he said, "we can light a cigarette in here, and you may tell me all there is to tell, and then return to your post with the Americans," and two tiny sparks of fire presently attested their whereabouts, seated upon a rock just within the entrance to the canyon, and the figure of a man creeping cautiously along the base of the mountain from the direction of the camp spied the little lights, and acted accordingly, dropping flat upon the ground and edging along slowly and surely until he was within earshot—until he was close enough to hear nearly all that was said between the two men; and then

he allowed himself to lie as still as though he were dead.

Juan had nearly completed his recital of what had taken place at the camp, where it had been decided to defy the bandit chieftain and his men, and was just describing Paul's plans for defending the valley, which, owing to his limited knowledge of English, he had imperfectly understood.

He had comprehended that it was the boy's intention to blow up the walls of the lower canyon, but he could not describe how it was to be accomplished, except that in some manner a cliff was to be tumbled over into the ravine, thus blocking it entirely.

"When is this work to be done?" asked Rubio, frowning

savagely

"Within the next seven days."
"Ah, so they deem themselves safe for seven days, eh?"

"They do."

The outlaw laughed aloud.

"They do not imagine that I have a spy in their midst, who keeps me informed of everything they say and do," he chuckled. "But why do they remain at a mine which they must know by this time to be worthless?"

"They are searching for a buried—"
"Yes, you have told me that before; but why do they think there is a treasure buried in the valley? Have you found that out?"

"No, senor; nothing more than that they seek for one hundred chests of gold; but who buried the gold, or how they know it to be here I cannot tell."

"Perhaps it would be better to let them work on, unmolested until they find the gold," mused Rubio. "I can then pounce down upon them and take it with very little trouble; whereas, if I kill them now, the gold may be lost forever.'

do not think so, senor."

"Why?

"I think the secret is now in the possession of one of them."
'Which one?"

"Their leader. "Don l'aulo?"

"The came, cenor. If I may be allowed to suggest something-

Proceed."

"I would surprise them at night when they are sleeping, kill them all with the exception of Don Paulo-

Well, what more?"

Take him prisoner and compel him to reveal the secret posses. Then, at our leisure, and with our greater he bo is its no dg of the rocks and mountains as well as the valley

Report the exclaimed, finally. "Your suggestion is a good or, Jan. How hall we surprise them?"

Do the Lot keep watch?"

o; and no idea that you were in this region until one come them elve perfectly secure for seven I o-mg it they were all sleeping."

or lan, Juan," aid Rubio, rolling a fresh come come triking a cerillo.

The to the vehi word, emphasic, and feel-this unexpected discovery.

spoke in an ordinary tone.

"To-morrow two of them ride to the lower canyon, and two of them to this one. Of the two who come this way Don Paulo is one. They could be lassoed in the canyon and held. Meanwhile the other two are but drawing our net more tightly around them, for by blocking the lower canyon they cut off all means of escape from the valley except by this pass, and they can never get through here alive unless we permit it. One of them, Senor King, remains behind with the two servants and myself. Of the two, I have approached Ignacio, and we can depend upon him, but Manuelito, I am convinced, will not join us, so his fate must be the same as theirs.

"My plan is as follows:

"Allow them to go to the lower canyon unmolested, but have Don Paulo and his companion lassoed as they are returning. Senores Lovelo and his companion cannot get back to the camp until the following night, and in the meantime Senor King and Manuelito can be taken prisoners or killed by Ignacio and myself.

"To-morrow night you can bring a few men in, who can hide in the tent, and when Senor Lovelo and the other returns, they can be shot before they have a suspicion that

anything is wrong. Afterward Don Paulo can be compelled to reveal his secret. Is not my plan a good one?"

"Excellent!" cried Rubio, rising to his feet, and casting aside his cigarette. "It shall be carried out to the letter. At what time do they start?"

"At daybreak."

"Bueno! Let them go their ways; I will teach them to defy Rubio, for I will have their gold and their lives as well, in payment of the tribute due me."

"Return now to the Americans, Juan, for with to-morrow your servitude ends, and you shall have Don Paulo for a

servant instead."

Juan's eyes glistened as he obeyed. "Bueno noches, Senor," he said, and disappeared in the darkness, while the bandit chief leaped upon his horse, which was standing near, and galloped away up the ravine.

Then the silent, motionless figure straightened up, stretched his arms and legs a moment, and uttered a low

whistle.

It was answered from a clump of bushes a hundred feet away, and in an instant more, with hasty steps, a tall, athletic form appeared out of the darkness.

It was Paul Pemberton, and the figure who had crept so stealthily upon the bandits, to overhear their conversation, was that of the incorruptible servant, Manuelito.

CHAPTER V.

THE EXECUTION -- MANUELITO.

It did not require much time for Manuelito to tell Paul everything that he had overheard in the conversation between the two bandits, and that our hero was surprised can readily be understood.

He had thrown himself upon his cot in the tent with the others, after the council and voting were finished, and was

soon soundly sleeping.

Suddenly a hand was laid upon his forehead, and a voice whispered in his ear:

"Hist! Come with me!"

He had silently arisen and passed from the shelter of the tent, to find that it was Manuelito who had called him.
"What is the matter?" he had questioned somewhat impatiently, and then Manuelito had told him how Juan and left him and Ignacio at their cards, and that he had a moment later seen him creeping toward the boys for the purpose of overhearing what was said. He had kept one eye upon the traitor, and when everybody retired for the night, Manuelito had remained awake, and seeing Juan go away, he inimediately aroused el capitan.
"What is to be done?" asked Paul. "Where has Juan

gone?"

"I do not know," replied Hanuelito. "There's but one place for him to go, and that is to the canyon."

Accordingly the servant had started away in the darkness in pursuit of Juan, and far enough in the rear so that the dark outline of Manuelito's figure was just discernible, had followed the tall form of Paul Pemberton, greatly troubled by

How Manuelito crept upon the unsuspecting bandits and overheard the plot against the brave American boys, we al-

ready know.

As soon as Paul thoroughly appreciated the situation he thanked the brave Mexican who had so opportunely kept watch, and then with long strides he started back toward the His lips were set tightly together, and there was a look of stern determination in his face that boded ill for Juan and Ignacio.

He had hastened on for a little way, when the Mexican's

hand was again laid upon him.
"If the senor will allow me," he said, "I will enter the camp first. Juan may be on the lookout, and if he saw us returning together he would know that he is discovered."

"Yes, go," said Paul, and as soon as Manuelito was out of sight in the darkness the American youth sat down upon the

plain to wait.

"It must be so," he said to himself. "I do not like the duty, but it must nevertheless be executed," and then he rose and strode onward.

He reached the tent, and entering quietly, he awoke the four sleepers, cautioning them to make no noise as he did so.

When they were all awake and attentive he told them what had happened, and bade each to think over what was best to

be done for their defense, and tell him in the morning.

"As for Juan," he said grimly, "you need give him no thought, for I have already settled his fate in my mind."

And then they returned to their cots. But not to sleep.

Every mind was active, and every nerve braced to meet the precipitated difficulties.

By and by the darkness began to disappear, and dawn was

upon them.

With one impulse they arose and stepped from the tent. The three servants were already about; the fire was lighted, and preparations for breakfast were begun.

Paul walked gravely toward them, and when he had nearly reached the spot where Juan was standing he paused.
"Juan!" he said coldly.

The Mexican looked up quickly and then, with a hoarse cry of affright, started back.

"Put up your hands!" ordered Paul, sternly.

The Mexican obeyed, faliling upon his knees at the same time, in a mute appeal for mercy; but there was none in the set lines of Paul Pemberton's face as he directed Charlie

King to disarm the kneeling Mexican.
"Juan," said Paul icily, "I followed you last night, and your meeting with Rubio was seen and the conversation overheard. There is no need for me to say more."
"Mercy! mercy!" screamed Juan.

"You have just five minutes to live," continued Paul, looking at his watch, and, turning, he directed the boys to get their guns.

They did so, and then, while Jim kept the traitor Juan covered with his revolver, Paul cut the balls from two cartridges, thus leaving two of the rifles loaded, and two containing only powder.

Then he once more mounted guard over the Mexican, while the four arranged themselves in line some thirty yards away.
"Mercy!" cried the wretch. "Do not fire, senor, and tonight I will take you to Rubio's camp, and you can kill them all.

"Scoundrel!" cried Paul, aghast at the man's infamy. "Would you betray your own comrades? Double-dyed traitor! Worse than assassin!

"Fire!" he cried, and four sharp reports rung out as one upon the early morning air, while the Mexican, without a sound, fell forward on his face dead.

"Now, where is Ignacio?" asked Paul, turning to look for Juan's companion, but he was nowhere to be seen.

Suddenly Buck discovered him about a quarter of a mile away, making toward the canyon as fast as his legs would carry him.

"He is leaving," murmured Jim.

"After him!" cried Buck, starting for a horse; but Manuclito, who had apparently taken in the situation at a glance, was already astride of Paul's stallion, and in an instant more was galloping furiously toward the flying and frightened fugitive.

Buck was about to follow, but Paul stopped him.

"Let them go," he said. "I was about to send Ignacio to Rubio's camp in safety, but inasmuch as Manuelito is after him, let his fate be what it will. We all owe our lives to Manuelite."

And then all were silent, for by that time the horseman had nearly overtaken the flying servant.

Suddenly he stopped and turned square around.

The five spectators saw a flash, saw Manuelito reel in his saddle and nearly fall, then recover himself just as the sound of the explosion of the firearm reached them.

Then the fugitive turned again and flew onward over the

level plain as though fear gave him wings.

But he was, of course, no match for the fleet horse ridden Manuelito.

The brave Mexican boy had taken a lasso on his arm, with true Mexican instinct, when he had mounted the horse, and he now began swinging it in bellowy circles over his head.
Suddenly it left his hand, and shot like a serpent through

the air, falling over the flying man's head.

Ere the coil had fairly settled upon Ignacio's shoulders, the horse, true to the word of command, had halted, and in an instant more had bounded off at a sharp angle.

The effect was awful to behold

The lasso became taut so suddenly that the flying bandit was thrown into the air several feet, turning over and over ere he struck the ground again,

But Manuelito did not take the trouble to look around, for

he knew Ignacio was dead already.

He only galloped on, describing a partial circle, nor did he pause until he had dragged the body of the second traitor into the midst of the camp.

Then, leaping from the horse, he reeled and fell to the

CHAPTER VI.

THE BURIED MESSENGER-LLORENTE, THE STRANGER.

Paul sprang to the assistance of the daring young Mexican at once, but a careful examination showed that he had received only a slight wound, from which he would soon recover.

When he had been attended to Buck and Harry were directed to start away for the lower canyon, as had been origi-

nally intended.

They took with them the canister of blasting powder, and Paul ordered them to barricade the canyon with it if pos-

"What we most desire." he said, "is to keep others out of this valley, which affords us food and water in abundance. When the time comes for us to escape we will find a means. Take plenty of provisions and get back as soon as you canbut I will not expect you before the day after to-morrow."

As soon as they departed Paul turned to Jim and Charlie. "Now, boys," he said, "we will send our message of defiance to Rubio."

"In what shape?" asked Jim, rather puzzled. "Where are

you going to find your messenger?"
"There," replied Paul, pointing to one of the burros. "We

do not need them all."

Jim nodded. "What more?" he asked. "Are you going to tie a note to his forelock?"

"Not exactly; but we'll tie those two Mexicans to his back and start him up the canyon with his freight. The outlaw will be on the lookout for you and me, to lasso us, so he will not fail to see the burro, or to receive the note which I shall fasten to him."

"Good! You write the note while Charlie and I pack the baggage," and in half an hour's time the sleepy-looking burro was being led toward the mouth of the upper canyon, bearing upon his back all that remained of Juan and Ignacio, and tied to one of his great, long ears was the following note, written in Paul's most comprehensive Spanish:

"Senor Rubio.—I return two servants, who are much more your property than this Little Horse Mine, for which you want two hundred dollars per month. I cannot pay it, nor do I desire to leave here just now. Your presence is expected by my party this evening, and that you will be warmly received you cannot doubt. You number fully fifty men, while we are but six; but do not forget that we are "American." "Senor Rubio .- I return two servants, who are much more

The three young men led the burro with its strange freight about an eighth of a mile up the canyon, and saw it well started on its way, just beyond a point where the two walls the really together, narrowing the ravine to a width of about twent, ext. Further up it widened out, the walls get-

threes and less precipitous, until it degenerated into what Plast in boys vould call a gully. The point selected by Paul for defending the pass could not have been better calculated for the purpose had it been planual by an engineer. For, about twenty rods below the narrow point above described, was a ledge of rock twenty or thity feet above the bottom of the canyon, which was ceae ed by a succession of smaller ledges, which became continually larger, until they terminated in the one described.
Upon this top ledge was a huge rock which had fallen from

overhead in such a position that it formed a natural barricude, being large enough to shelter a half score of men behind it, and from it the entire length of the narrow portion

of the canyon could be seen and commanded.

Paul calculated that one determined man with a couple of repeating rifles could keep back a regiment from gaining access to the valley below; and so the three engaged themselves in making the stronghold more tenable and perfect, collecting the material for a huge fire which they proposed lighting an account of the stronghold more tenable and perfect, collecting the material for a huge fire which they proposed lighting as soon as night should fall.

They all expected that Rubio would be greatly incensed when the burro with its funereal burden should reach him, and Paul felt that the coming night would be filled up with some pretty hot work for him and his companions—three

against the whole force of the bandits, probably.

A terrible night it proved to be.

But let us return to Buck and Harry, who were bound for

the lower canyon.

They galloped over the plain until nearly four o'clock in the afternoon before they arrived there, having stopped several times to "breathe" their horses, and to get a bite to eat

However, a little before four o'clock they reached the head of the canyon without incident, and decided to select a good spot and camp for the night, as it was much too late for them to accomplish the object of their visit before dark.

Accordingly, they found a spring, near which they con-

cluded to spend the night.

Just before dismounting Harry had seen some antelope feeding beyond a grove of trees about a mile from the site of their camp, and as soon as the horses were cared for, and things were settled generally, they started, by means of an arroyo—the dry bed of a brook—which was several feet deep, and which skirted the grove, to get a shot at the beautiful creatures.

The circuit was made without any trouble, their heads not

once appearing above the level of the plain.

At last they arrived at a point which they judged must be within easy shot of the objects of their search, and selecting a point where the water had washed around a harder piece of soil, they stealthily climbed to the top and peered cauticusly in the direction in which they supposed the antelope to be.

Not one was to be seen, however.

Something had evidently startled them but a moment before, as both Buck and Harry could plainly determine by a little cloud of dust in the distance, which told how the nimble animals were scudding away over the plain.

Buck was about to make an expressive remark, indicative of his disappointment, when Harry grasped him savagely by

"Look there!" he cried excitedly, at the same time getting his rifle into position. "Who is that fellow? Cover him, Bock; we'll hold him up and grant him an interview, any-

The stranger was riding unsuspectingly forward with evidently no idea that a human being was near him, until he was

modenly startled by a sharp command,

ordered Buck sternly, "and throw up your nende."

The hor, e was brought to a sudden standstill by his rider, and immediately railed his hands over his head, although at the same time he replied;

" intiende, enor..."

race he confounded jargon.

t on addressed the tranger, who was a tall, well-respond to the control of the c

- What by o crypere?

"Rubio, the bandit,"

"Who?"

"Rubio, the---"

"Yes, yes; but why do you seek him?" The stranger hesitated before replying:

"Gentlemen." he said, "allow me to inquire who you are, and why you thus question me? If you are members of Rubio's band, conduct me to him; if not, lower your weapons, and allow me to dismount, and I will reply to your questions with pleasure.

Harry translated the pith of the man's rather lengthy speech to Buck, who nodded acquiescence, whereupon Harry explained enough of their concerns to satisfy the stranger

that they were not of Rubio's command,

Senor Llorente then dismounted, allowing his horse to stray away over the plains, while he came to the edge of the

"I am seeking Rubio," he said, "in reply to a very strange summons I received from him some time ago. I will relate it to you, because during your stay in this region you may have seen or heard something that will aid me.

"Let us return to the camp," said Buck, interrupting, and leaping across the narrow space. "You can talk as we stroll along, and I am getting most awfully 'peckish,' as the old hen

"What was the summons?" asked Harry of the newcomer. "This," and the stranger handed a piece of paper to Harry, on which was written in good Spanish the following:

"I have in my possession that which is worth more to you than anything you possess. If you will come to secure it you will be allowed to return to your home unmolested, taking with you that of which I speak on payment of five thousand dollars. The bearer will give you all necessary directions."

"Have you no idea to what this refers?" asked Harry, translating for Buck's benefit all that had passed.

"None whatever."

"Have you ever been robbed?"

"Never!"

"And yet you are seeking this man-this bandit, who has probably only laid a trap for you to fall into, believing that he has told you the truth; that he has something valuable which belongs to you.'

"I am."

"Carrying with you, no doubt, the money he demands for this valuable property."

"No, I did not bring that," replied Senor Llorente calmly.

"I left that behind me."

"It is all the same," muttered Harry. "With such a scoundrel as that Rubio it makes little difference whether you have the money with you or shut up in some bank. In one case he would steal it from you, and in the other demand it in payment for your release—a ransom.'

"Nevertheless, in this case I do not think so."
"Why not in this case?"

"I have his promise not to molest me in any way."

"Bah!" exclaimed Harry

"Nevertheless, I believe his promise to be good."

Harry said no more, but mentally put Schor Llorente down as half crazy to start upon such a foolish expedition without

even knowing its real object.

"Well," said Harry dryly, as they reached their camp and set about preparing supper, "all I have got to say is that you are in mighty poor company now, to treat with Rubio, for the simple reason that he has sworn to exterminate us-andwell—the ah—probable consequence will be his extermination

The stranger smiled at the young man's assurance and confidence in his own powers, but munched his food in silence.

Darkness began to settle down, and all drew nearer to the campfire, which was built close by a huge shelving rock, under which they spread their blankets, both Buck and Harry making the stranger as welcome at their fireside and their meal as though he were really one of them.

Buck, who never said much, and who would not, rather than could not, speak when the Spanish language was being util-Tale, so i h to him, Harry," said Buck, blankly. "I never ized, had during the protracted conversation between Harry and the stranger, furtively, and yet narrowly watched the newcomer.

Without knowing why, he could not overcome a certain feeling of suspicion and distrust with which this so-called

Senor Llorente inspired him.

Two or three times while they were talking together

around the fire, he had warned Harry in English not to say too much until they were better assured who this stranger

To Buck Lovel, his story was altogether too improbable, too visionary; and he felt that any Mexican living in that region, or within riding distance of it, should know the character of such beings as Rubio too well to thus thrust himself into his power upon the bandit's simple promise that he should not be molested.

Honor among thieves reads very well in footpad literature, but Buck believed it to be an exploded idea, and so far as Rubio was concerned, he knew it did not exist, for had he not promised Paul a seven days' respite from molestation, and then plotted with a treacherous servant to massacre the

five Americans the very next night?

Such thoughts were coursing through the brain of Buck Lovel as the three rolled themselves in their blankets for the night, and although Harry very quickly dropped into a noisy

slumber, his eyes remained wide open.

But time and fatigue and the sense of solitude soon proved too much for his senses, which gradually grew less and less vigilant, while his eyelids drooped lower and lower, until they were shut.

Buck was sleeping.

Suddenly, however, he awoke with a start, as though a hand

had grasped him and a voice had said, "Arise!"

Then he sprang to his feet with a sudden throb of fear, for just through the outer circle of the firelight the figure of Senor Llorente was disappearing in the darkness.

With an exclamation of astonishment, Buck awoke Harry, and in a moment more the two brave boys were creeping along after the stranger, determined to discover what his object could be in thus stealing away.

Could they have guessed, they would have bounded into their saddles and escaped, even though the night was upon

them.

CHAPTER VII.

A STRANGE CAMPFIRE-A DANGEROUS TRAP.

Buck and Harry stole along silently after the rapidly disappearing figure of Senor Llorente, each wondering vaguely in his own mind what could be the stranger's reason for acting in such a stealthy manner, and indeed, who he might be.

The events of the last moment or two had satisfied them that he was not the innocent personage he had described

himself to be.

The direction that he took upon leaving the fireside surprised them, also, for instead of being toward the horses, it was directly away from them, and in the direction of the

head of the canyon, which was not very far distant.

It was by no means difficult to keep him in view, as he hurried along in the starlight, convinced, no doubt, that the

two boys were still soundly sleeping by their campfire.

He strode along with the air and manner of one who was thoroughly familiar with his whereabouts, never pausing an instant as if in doubt as to his course, or to look behind him to discover if he were being followed.

Buck was greatly puzzled.

"Who could that stranger be?" he kept asking himself, but of course there was no solution to the problem at present. On they went, the stranger in advance, and the boys creep-

ing stealthily behind, until at last the canyon was reached.

Senor Llorente passed into the deeper gloom of the ravine without a moment's hesitation, and the two boys feared they would lose sight of him, but when they had also reached it they could just discern his form, like a shadow, only a trifle darker than the rest, hurrying rapidly along down the narrow defile.

They followed stealthily but doggedly on, never once hesitating until the point was reached to which Buck had referred in their talk, when he had proposed blowing up the

walls of the lower canyon.

At that point the ravine made a sharp turn to the right, and when Llorente disappeared around the bend the boys hurried forward hastily to see where he had gone.

Imagine their surprise when, about two hundred yards farther down, they saw the blaze of several campfires, around

his hand on his companion's shoulder.

"I do not know," replied Buck, "unless they are a part of Rubio's bandits.

"But if they are," asked Harry again, "how did they get down here without our knowing it?"

"It may be some detached band or company, which has been away for some time and is just returning," conjectured Buck. "See!" pointing toward the campfires, "there goes our friend Llorente into their midst as if he belonged there."

"Buck!" cried Harry suddenly.

"What?"

"We must blow up this canyon to-night!"
"We must—what?"

"Do our work to-night instead of to-morrow."
"What do you mean?"

"What I say."

"But how?"

"You remain here on watch while I go and fetch the giant powder."

"But suppose they—?"
"Let them! I will run all the way back and get the canister and have it here in a jiffy."

"But they are likely to get through with their confab and

come this way."

"Only one of them will come this way, probably, and that is Llorente.

"Well!"

"I can run faster than you, so I will go for the powder. You remain on the watch. If Llorente leaves the campfire to return, hold him up when he gets here, and if he makes a noise, shoot him and run for the camp. I will have heard your shot, in such a case, and I will meet you with the horses. If they all move this way, dig for it without making any noise and we will get to the horses and vamoose before they are any way near us, for they will come along quietly and

slowly in order to surprise us."

"All right, Harry, run; don't wait."

With all the speed he could muster, the brave boy started

off up the canyon toward the camp.

It was not very far, and he knew that practically all their lives depended in a measure on his reaching camp, securing the powder, and returning to the point where he had left Buck in time to blow up he canyon, before anybody connected with the strange campfire should attempt to pass.

The time, which seemed to fly so quickly to him, speeding

along as he did through the darkness, passed like hours in-

stead of minutes to Buck, who sat under the shelter of a rock, watching the people below.

Three times did the stranger who had given his name as Llorente arise from the position he had taken on the ground, as if shout to hid his stranger who had taken on the ground, as if about to bid his strange friends good-night, and return to the fireside of the boys against whom he was doubtless plotting; but every time, as if some fate was watching over the welfare of the young Americans, he sat down again, and it was just as he had reseated himself for the third time that Harry dashed up, out of breath.

"Have you got it?" asked Buck, eagerly, who now began to see the practical side of Harry's suggestion.

"You bet I have!" was the reply.

"Good! You keep your eyes on those fellows now, while I search for a crevice of the right size for the blast."

And while Harry threw himself flat upon the sod behind a projecting boulder, Buck began clambering into the fissure with which he was familiar, and which he knew would offer better facilities for the purpose he had in view than one which he might manufacture with drills.

It was with difficulty that he could work his body into the narrow opening, but he finally succeeded in getting through, and crawled along fifty or sixty feet on his hands and knees to a point where there was a little natural pocket in the rock, just large enough to snugly admit the canister.
It was but the work of a moment for Buck to crowd the

canister of giant powder into the pocket.

Unscrewing the little brass cap on top, he thrust the fuse. which had been wound about the can ever since they left their homes, deep into the powder.

Then piling gravel and pebbles, and, lastly, stones as large as he could lift upon the little magazine which was to work such havoc, he carefully uncoiled the fuse, laying it out so that the coils did not come in contact with each other, and thus too greatly shorten the time it would take to explode the mine.

which dark forms could be seen.

"Who can they be?" whispered Harry anxiously, putting match, he applied it to the end of the fuse, and his work was

finished.

It was all been done in absolute darkness, and as he hurried 10 could see the little spark that occasionally hissed snapped as it hurried on toward the explosion which was

hange the entire character of the place. A moment's hasty creeping brought him to the fissure by which he had entered the narrow crevice, and with a sharp list!" to Harry, he began making his way through it.

The first effort was all right, but at the second one he grew pale with apprehension, for he saw that in his haste he had attempted to pass through somewhat higher up than he had first entered.

Buck pushed and crowded with all his might, but it was of no use; he could not get through.
"Harry!" he called, but there was no answer.

Harry was either out of earshot, or something had happened in Buck's absence.

Then he tried to get back again into the crevice, in order to make a new start, but he saw with dismay that he was fast in the opening, and could neither move one way nor the other.

And all the time he knew that the fuse he had just lighted was burning on and on, getting momentarily closer and closer to the terrible powder which was to tear away the entire part of the cliff where he was, and throw it into the mid-

dle of the canyon.

Buck groaned in agony as he realized the awful fate that was staring him in the face. To be held like a beaver caught in a trap, knowing to a certainty that in a very few moments he would be buried hundreds of feet deep beneath the rocks that were to be convulsed and torn asunder and toppled over by the mine which he had laid himself for the purpose of blocking the passage, was something awful.

The situation was terrible.

"Harry!" he cried, with all his strength, fearing nothing

so much as the explosion so soon to follow.
"Harry—Harry—help!" But there came no answer to his call, no hurrying footfall, no cheery voice inquiring what the

Where was Harry? What had happened while Buck had been charging the mine? Why did he not come to Buck's assistance, as he lay there feeling that his last hour had come, and knowing that the fuse had not more than three minutes longer to burn.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SILENT SENTINEL.

Paul and Jim worked on indefatigably at their defensible point in the upper canyon, after they had sent the burro with

its strange and appalling message to Rubio.

By the time they had finished, and felt prepared to meet the forces of the bandit chief from their stronghold, it was

late in the afternoon.

Our hero could not but feel rather elated as he looked upon his preparations, for he was satisfied that he alone, with two good repeating rifles and plenty of ammunition, could keep back a hundred—ay, a thousand—men from passing his little fortification to the valley.

Moreover, to guard against the possibility that the bandits might creep past under cover of the darkness, he had stacked up a huge pile of wood just abreast of the ledge where the lookout was to be, and this he proposed lighting as soon as

darkness should settle down.

Paul had calculated that the fire thus created would light up the entire floor of the canyon sufficiently to make it an impossibility for any of Rubio's men, no matter how adept the might be, to get past Fort Pemberton, as he laughingly named it.

Vinen the preparations were completed and everything was m readine. for the approach of the enemy, a sudden idea

occurred to Paul.

Jin," he laid, "Charlie will be back before long, and I to come here, you know, and I have concluded to go at on a little couting expedition."

Think jou had better remain, Paul," replied Jim, cau-You can't tell what sort of a meal those fellows

"All the same, I wouldn't go," reiterated Jim, senten-

Paul thought for a moment, and then knitting his brows a little, he said:

"I think I will go, Jim."

"Very well, Paul; do as you think best, but it is very much against my judgment. What shall I do?"

"You had better take up your position on the ledge," replied Paul, "and when Charlie comes keep him with you until I return. I won't be gone more than three hours. That will bring me back here just a little after dark."

"You are determined to go?"

"Yes, I think so-the danger is very slight."

"Very well, Paul," said Jim, extending his hand. "Good-

"Good-by, Jim. I'll be back in two or three hours."

Jim shook his head doubtfully.

"Light the fire when it begins to get dark," continued Paul, "and keep good watch. There is my rifle—I shall not want

"Why not?"

"It will only be in the way. I may have to run, you know. Here, take these heavy revolvers also; all I want I have up my sleeves."

So saying, Paul threw out his hand with a sudden motion, which caused a little revolver, carrying five number thirtytwo cartridges, to fly into his hand from his sleeve, where it was concealed by being fastened to a little steel spring, which in turn was attached to the inside of the coat sleeve.

Each of the five boys was provided with the same arrange-

Without more words, Paul Pemberton started briskly up the canyon, soon disappearing from Jim's sight; the latter mounted to his perch on the ledge of rock, and sat there, glum and discontented, for he felt strange misgivings about Paul's trip up the canyon.

He knew Paul well enough, however, to know that there would be no use in arguing against it if he had decided that

it was best to make the trip, and so he had said very little.
"Nice condition of things," he muttered dejectedly. "Buck and Harry way down to the lower canyon, and probably in some difficulty or other, two servants dead and the other disabled, Charlie undoubtedly thrown from his horse and lying with broken head or ribs or something out on the plain where he went to look for that confounded arrow, Paul gone off on a wild-goose hunt in which he is dead sure to lose his life, or his scalp, or both, and I, poor brute, perched up here on this ledge of rock in a forgotten canyon, as though I were the only inhabitant of the Republic of Mexico, watching for a horde of bandits to come swarming down on me like an avalanche from the Alps. I wouldn't care a rap if I wasn't so confounded hungry, and with no chance of getting anything to eat, either, as I see."

And so he grumbled on, for Jim was fond of grumbling on the surface, while really he was very easy to please and generally pretty well satisfied with life and its conditions as he found them.

But let us follow Paul as he passed rapidly up the canyon

toward the haunts of Rubio.

He knew that he could traverse the first two miles with little or no fear, and that nothing was really to be apprehended short of three miles, and so he hurried along at a brisk trot, watching keenly ahead of him for any signs of danger that might be about.

He saw none, however, until the better part of three miles had been traversed, when suddenly, as he hurried rapidly, but more cautiously along, he discovered the figure of a man leaning against a rock about a hundred yards ahead of him.

With one spring Paul crouched out of sight behind some rocks, but the man did not move or show any sign of having

He worked his way slowly along from rock to rock toward the motionless bandit, intending to get the "drop" on him as soon as he should be close enough.

seen him, so he began to creep cautiously forward.

It was a foolhardy undertaking, and Paul ordinarily had too much good judgment to endeavor anything at such a great risk, but as has been said before, Paul Pemberton's bravery amounted to recklessness at times, and when he started out to go up the canyon on the little scouting expedition, it was preactly because I want to get a smell of it that I with a sense of the great danger into which he had brought his four dearly loved companions, resting upon him. He had therefore resolved that if any act or any sacrifice of his could be a companion of the peril which hung over their heads he would not he head to go up the canyon on the little scouting expedition, it was with a sense of the great danger into which he had brought his four dearly loved companions, resting upon him. He had therefore resolved that if any act or any sacrifice of his could be a companion.

It was beginning to grow dark in the canyon, although on the mountains and even in the valley where the camp was located, the sun was still shining.

Slowly but steadily Paul crept onward toward the motion-

less figure leaning against the rock.

Finally, after the lapse of several minutes, he rose behind a boulder somewhat larger than the others which he had passed, throwing out his arm to catch the little revolver up his sleeve.

But as he did so there was a peculiar whirring sound in the air, and he felt something which seemed like a serpent settle down over his head and shoulders, pinioning his arms

tightly to his sides in an instant.

Paul sprang nimbly in the direction from whence the cast had been made, but as he did so a second one was thrown from the opposite side, and in an instant, almost before he had time to realize what had happened, each lasso was drawn taut, and he was held as in a vise, powerless to move in either direction.

Then he looked to see who his captors were, and beheld, not more than thirty feet distant on either side of him, a swarthy, villainous-looking Mexican, while waddling toward him from up the canyon came the little figure of the dwarf who had accosted him so recently from the top of the flat rock.

"Rubio!" exclaimed Paul, deeply chagrined at being so

easily caught.

"Si, senor," replied Rubio, courteously, for he had approached near enough to hear. "Are you uncomfortable?" he continued, smiling at Paul's strained position, caused by the tight lasso loops about his body.

At the same instant he made a sign to the men who had caught the American so deftly, and they straightway loosened the cords so that they fell about Paul's feet, nor was he slow

to step out of them.

"The seven days have not expired yet," said Paul, haughty. "Why do you molest me in this way?"
Rubio smiled disdainfully.

"I have received the senor's message," he said, "and moreover, was not the senor about to order yonder dead man, his former servant, to hold up his hands?"

Paul hung his head in deep chagrin. Some of Rubio's men had undoubtedly discovered that he was making his way up the canyon, and they had taken the body of Juan and stood it up against the boulder purposely,

knowing that the young American could not escape them.
Rubio chuckled gleefully, and rubbed his hands merrily together, as he watched the effect of his words upon the cap-

At the sound of his captor's mirth, Paul straightened up and held back his proud head haughtily.

"Well, I am your prisoner," he said. "What is to be my

fate?"

"A ransom, a promise to leave the country or pay tribute, or death, such as you accorded Juan there," pointing his finger at the silent sentinel who had intrigued for the last time.

"How much?"

"I will tell you in the morning, senor. To know it now might disturb your sleep. Come—I will do you the honor

personally to conduct you to your prison."

"You are very kind," said Paul, ironically. "It is all the same to me whether it is you or one of your men who waits on me. Perhaps I may yet have a chance to offer you the same judgment he got, pointing to Juan.

Rubio scowled, then smiled. "Perhaps," he said. "But come, and let me warn you, do not try to escape, for if you do you will be instantly killed."

CHAPTER IX.

AN UNKNOWN FRIEND.

All Mexican houses of the ordinary class, except in such places as the city of Mexico, Puebla, Guadalajara, or the beautiful cities in the southern part of the Republic, are built of adobe.

Adobe is nothing more nor less than dry mud, rather clayey in its quality. It is dug out of any soil that happens to be nearest, and by the aid of water is made into huge bricks twelve to sixteen inches square, and eight to ten inches thick.

They are allowed to dry and harden in the sun, and when that operation is complete they are laid one upon the other

after the manner of ordinary bricks, a little square hole heing left for a window and a low, narrow aperture for a deway. A little water poured upon one brick when another placed on top of it is all the mortar that is used, and who these houses are once constructed and allowed to dry in in

sun, they will last for years in the dry climate of the south.

They are never more than one story high, and often more that, when they are erected by particularly lazy or impoversated Mexicans. The roofs are made of reeds, grasses, converting that can be wroten or matted together.

anything that can be woven or matted together,

It was just such an edifice as that last described to which Paul was led a prisoner.

A little house, the roof of which was not as high as his own head, and over the top of which he could easily see as he stood erect by it.

A plate of frijoles negras (baked beans) was given him, which he ate with a great deal of relish, mentally remarking, as he had done many times before, that there were only two places in the world where beans could be properly baked —Boston and Mexico.

About fifty feet faither on was another adobe house of better quality, which Rubio pointed out as being his own place

of abode.

It was well made, having a much higher roof, and was provided with good-sized windows and doors.

As Paul glanced at it indifferently, a very surprising inci-

dent occurred.

A young lady of wonderful beauty stepped out from the doorway, and was about to throw herself carelessly into a chair which stood near, when she happened to look up, and espied Rubio and his prisoner.

Instantly she came toward them, apparently utterly indifferent to the savage frown which darkened Rubio's brow.

Paul was for once thoroughly nonplused. The very last thing he had thought to see hidden away in a bandit's camp in the wild mountains of Mexico was a young girl.

And such a one!

Her olive skin was as clear and fine as a shell picked from the shores of a southern sea, and her great, pleading, snapping, pitiless, pitying, mirthful, pathetic, black eyes shone as stars shine when the night is clear in the tropics. Over her head was carelessly thrown a lace mantilla and she walked with the grace and sprightliness of a young doe.

As Paul gazed admiringly at her, forgetting his surroundings in the magic of her wonderful, bewitching beauty, she

looked up at him, and their eyes met for an instant. But it was only for an instant, for she dropped hers again quickly, while the blood rushed to her brow and cheeks in a crimson flood.

Altering her evident intention of speaking to Rubio, she turned, and without a word returned to her door, where, picking up a guitar that was leaning against her chair, she began to play dreamily, beautifully.
"Who is that?" asked Paul, abruptly, of Rubio, speaking

somewhat breathlessly.

"That, senor," replied Rubio pompously—if it were possible for a dwarf to be pompous—"is my daughter."

"Your daughter! / Yours?"

"Even so, senor."

Paul broke into a hearty, ringing laugh. "What amuses the senor?" asked Rubio, with an ugly glitter in his eyes.

"The idea of a peach growing on a crab apple tree!" exclaimed Paul, still laughing. "Your daughter! You should be called Bertruccio, and dubbed a fool for keeping her here."

"Si, senor," with an obsequious inclination of his head; "but by keeping her here, I am not likely to be called upon to seek a fool's revenge."

Without further ado, our hero was thrust into the adobe hut, and a door made of reeds was closed upon him, just as daylight faded away and darkness covered the earth.

There was a guard at the door, and another one behind the hut, to prevent his escaping by the roof.

Paul stretched himself upon the couch of blankets to think. but as he did so, something hard beneath them attracted his attention, and he sprang to his feet to examine into its cause.

Imagine his surprise upon finding a regular army saber and scabbard there, which the owner had evidently forgotten, in its hiding place. It had belonged to Juan, and was, therefore, ownerless.

Paul buckled it about him, smiling grimly as he did so. "It may come handy," he mused, as he threw himself again upon the blankets.

An hour passed away, and his mind was partially dormant

in a drowsiness, and yet viewing the vision of a beautiful are, mixed with pictures of home and friends, when there

ane a strange interruption.

I came in the form of an ordinary Mexican dagger which worred from the roof at his side, and looking up quickly he could see where a small hole had been made for the pur-

by the aid of a lighted match Paul examined the dagger

critically.

There was nothing unusual about it except the manner in which it had come to him.

For a long time he pondered deeply, and then raised him-

self with a sudden exclamation.
"Free profile whispered to himself, excitedly: "but how?"; He went to the door and listened, and could blainly hear voices conversing in a low tone on the other side of it. That the two sentinels were talking together he had no doubt, probably lighting their cigarettes.

Quickly his decision was taken.

Creeping to the furthest corner of the hut, he struck a match, with which the inflammable material of which the roof was composed was easily and speedily ignited. Then thrusting his arm through at another point, he discharged one

of the little revolvers which were still in his possession. Then, without pausing an instant, Paul hastened back to the deor, and without hesitation opened it and passed into

the open air.

Two or three quick bounds brought him to the rear of the adjoining house or hut, behind which he quickly crouched.

He had barely had time to gain his position when the sky was lighted up by the burning roof of the hut which he had left.

Paul threw himself flat upon the ground, wisely thinking that he would be searched for anywhere else except where he

He could plainly hear the cries and shouts of the men as they dashed off in different directions to capture him, but he remained prone upon the ground within fifty feet of his former prison, the dagger which had dropped through the roof to him clutched firmly in his hand.

Just as Paul was congratulating himself that he would not be discovered, he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and with a startled cry he sprang upon one knee and raised his arm to

strike.

But the hand which held the dagger fell to his side powerless, for there before him, lighted up by the red glare of the fire, was the beautiful face of Rubio's daughter.

CHAPTER X.

THE ESCAPE—CLARITA.

"You!" exclaimed Paul, dazed for an instant by the unlooked-for encounter.

'Hush, senor! Yes, it is I," she replied. "Follow me quickly if you wish to escape," and without another word she

turned and glided around the corner of the hut.

The blaze ignited by Paul had by that time almost entirely died away, so that the darkness seemed greater than before. The material of which the roof had been composed had become so dry that it flashed up like tinder, and died out as

Silently and swiftly the Mexican girl glided onward, until the opposite side of the hut was reached, and there she

pau ed before a doorway.

Enter here," she said hurriedly, "and wait until I call."

But, enorita," replied Paul, "if I am discovered here think

of the consequences to yourself."

You will not be discovered," she replied.

Bit I may be.'

tamped her foot impatiently.

You certainly will be if you remain at the doorway to

cruter, senor, and wait."

a ked Paul, as he passed through the door-

er in here until all is quiet," she replied.

31 or not tell me to whom I am indebted for this The selection

a large of han our in her voice.

for b talking here you are endangering

After that rebuke Paul did not essay to break the silence again.

And so an hour passed away, with Paul silently and patiently awaiting any event which might transpire, and in the meantime watching through the open doorway the motionless figure of the Mexican girl as she sat idly strumming the strings of a guitar.

Suddenly a gruff voice broke the stillness.

It was that of Rubio, who was returning from the search,

disappointed, and therefore not in the best of humor.
"It is time for you to retire," he said in Spanish, addressing the girl, who without raising her face, or pausing in her occupation, calmly replied:

"I am not yet ready to do so."

"You never are; you prefer to sit here by the door mooning half the night."

"Quien sabe," murmured the girl, shrugging her shoulders

indifferently.

"Go to your bed," ordered Rubio, gruffly, as he turned away. "I shall return in ten minutes, and don't let me find you here."

He walked away a few steps, then paused and returned.

"Have you been here all the time?" he asked. "All of what time?"

"Since the prisoner escaped." "I do not know when he did so."

"Bah! since the roof was set afire. Were you sitting here then?"

'No, I was inside."

"Then you did not see the prisoner?"

"It is not likely, since I was not here. Did he succeed in making his escape?"

"Yes, completely. We could find no trace of him," and with a muttered oath the bandit walked away in the darkness.

There were not more than five or six huts scattered about at different distances from each other, the majority of the bandits finding shelter in a grotto before which a huge fire was burning, lighting up the faces of several monte players who had quickly forgotten the prisoner and his escape.

"Now, senor," said the girl, as soon as Rubio had passed

out of sight, "come quickly, and keep close to me."

Paul instantly stepped out from the door, and followed rapidly after his conductor, who sped like a night-bird across a little open space, into the shadow of the next hut.

They quickly passed around to the rear of that, and then

to another, the back of which abutted on the cliff.

There she branched off to the right, following a path which skirted the cliff or wall, for it was neither large enough nor high enough to be called a cliff. This she followed for a distance of two hundred feet, when they came upon a rude corral, made of cactus leaves, inside of which were a number of

"Senor," she said, pointing to the gate, "there is the private equipment of Rubio, the chief. They are all American horses, and good ones; and, what is better, they know the path down the canyon as well in the dark as in the day. Select one and lead it here. I will then show you how to reach the canyon."
"But you—what will become of you?" asked Paul, hesi-

"I? I shall return to the house where you have been waiting." "And suppose Rubio discovers that you have assisted me?"

"He will not." "But if he should, what then?"

"I do not know. He would kill me, perhaps; it would be as well."

"As well as what?" demanded Paul, startled by the peculiar sadness in the girl's tone, a sadness that sounded like resignation or despair.

"As well as the other fate that awaits me," she replied.

"Do not think me impertinent," said Paul, "but you rendered me a great service, for which I cannot sufficiently thank you. In return I would like to be of service to you, if possible. I know by your reply that you are in difficulty of some kind. Let me aid you."

"Impossible, senor."

"Why impossible?"

"Has not Rubio told you that he is my father, and must I rought he was ilent, and when she spoke it was not therefore obey him?"

That was a poser, and Paul did not know how to reply. "What is it that he asks you to do?" he inquired presently.

"I cannot tell you, senor—there is no time now. Secure a

horse and fly, or you will be recaptured.'

Without another word Paul entered the cactus stockade. Selecting the horse nearest him, he led it outside, to discover that his companion had disappeared; but he had hardly had time to manifest any surprise before she reappeared, burdened with the weight of a saddle and bridle.

"Put these on your horse, senor," she said, simply; and

Paul obeyed, wondering what motive this strange girl could

have in thus befriending him.

"Now follow," she continued, when Paul's preparations were completed; and she glided away down another path which he had not noticed before.

Not a word was spoken between them for several moments,

when suddenly the Mexican girl stopped.

"Here we part, senor," she said. "Pass through that defile," pointing with her finger, "and it will bring you to the canyon. Then turn to the left."

canyon. Then turn to the left."

"But, senorita," said Paul, "will you not tell me your name before we part? Mine is Paul Pemberton; I entreat you to

tell me yours."

"My name?" she said, hesitatingly.

"Yes, please."

"It is Clarita, senor," and then, not giving him time to ceply, she continued:

"Now make haste, and see that you keep strict watch to-norrow after sundown. Adios, senor."

She turned to leave him, but Paul put out his hand and detained her.

"One word more, senorita," he said. She paused and waited without replying.

If I can serve you in any way will you call on me?" asked

"But you cannot."

"If you should be in danger, or if you should seek to escape that fate to which you referred, there are six of us who will fight for you and defend you to the last, and if the time should come when you would put me to the test you know where to find the camp."

"Good-night, and from my heart I thank you."

With one bound Paul was in the saddle, but he had no sooner alighted when his horse reared up in affright, for out from behind a rock not five feet away had sprang the figure of a man, and grasped the bridle.
"Para!" he cried as the horse recoiled from his rough clasp

and startlingly sudden appearance.

Paul acted on the instant.

By his side still hung the saber he had found under the blankets, and as the horse rose in the air he pulled it from the scabbard

Then, as the Mexican pulled the animal downward to cover the rider with his pistol, Paul leaned over and struck with all his might.

A swish—a dull thud, and all was still again, for the Mex-

ican was lying senseless upon the ground.

Paul turned in his saddle to say a last word to Clarita, but she had gone, and without pausing another instant he gave rein to the horse and dashed away down the canyon toward the valley, and home and friends.

For a long time after the saber struck him the Mexican remained motionless, but at last a sigh escaped him, and

finally he raised himself to a sitting posture.

Slowly and laboriously he got upon his feet and staggered along the pathway toward the huts, muttering as he went, for he had both heard and seen what had transpired, and was vowing vengeance upon Clarita.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EXPLOSION-"GO, AND GOD BLESS YOU!"

Buck had given himself up for lost, and like a panorama his whole life passed in review before him. But just when he had given up all hope, when he knew that the fuse he had lighted had not more than two minutes more to burn before igniting the powder, he heard a welcome sound.

It was the voice of Harry, calling him softly:

"Buck- Buck!

"Here-quick, for heaven's sake!" he called back, and in an instant more Harry DeForest had seized him, and was tugging away with the strength of desperation.
"Hurry pull!" urged Buck, despairingly, "in a moment

more the mine will explode and we will both be buried alive." Harry pulled with all his might, but in vain.

Buck was surely fast.

"Run, Harry!" ordered the imprisoned boy. "You cannot release me, and there is no use trying. Run while you have

Run and leave you?"

"Yes! You would only commit suicide by remaining! Run -you owe it to the others—tell them about it—fly!

"I can't!" exclaimed Harry.

"You can and will—it is my last request. Go, and heaven bless you!

Grasping Buck's one hand, which was at liberty, Harry bent over and kissed it, and then with a sob leaped to his teet

and darted away.

Nor was he a moment too soon, for by the time he had covered a hundred yards the silence of the night was broken by a loud report, while a red flame shot into the air behind him, carrying with it huge pieces of rock, and the ground trembled as with an earthquake.

Stones large and small fell thickly about him as he ran, but by a miracle which he never could explain he escaped un-

touched through it all.

And then, as suddenly as the explosion had come, the noises ceased, and a stillness like death settled over the can-yon and mountains, as if nature itself was appalled and struck senseless by the sudden upheaval.

But Harry did not pause.

There was a horror upon him which he could not have named. It was not fear; it was more like desperation, and he had fancied that he could hear Buck cry out when the explosion came; nor was he quite sure that he had done right in leaving him.

And so he ran on, stumbling over stones and clumps of bushes and tufts of sod, out into the valley and across the

little stretch of plain toward the camp.

And then a new thought came to him which lent him added speed, and he flew onward toward the horses.

When he had been out of the reach of Buck's voice in the canyon, it was because he had seen the figure of Senor Llorente coming toward him, having evidently finished his talk with the men about the campfire, and being on his way back to the boys' impromptu camp, which he had so unceremoniously abandoned, and Harry had at once concluded that under the circumstances it was best to allow the stranger to quietly pass, thus giving Buck time to complete his work.

It was not the one man he feared, but the many which the

one might bring down upon them.

Harry had accordingly crept hastily away and concealed himself, thus allowing the man to pass on into the valley un-molested, and the sudden thoughts that came to the flying boy as he sped along was that Llorente was probably already at the camp, and would have the horses, while there yet remained a probability that he had not yet reached there when the explosion occurred, and so Harry sped on, hoping to get there first.

Fear and anxiety lent him wings, and in a few moments

more he could see the firelight.

Slackening his pace, he approached more cautiously, peering anxiously through the darkness for the presence he feared to see.

There was no one there, and regardless of ordinary caution, Harry rushed in the firelight, seized the few possessions which Buck and he had left lying about, and darted out again toward the horses.

It was difficult to find them, and he hastily mounted his own steed.

Fastening the other two together, he seized the leading strap and dashed away over the plain toward the home camp as fast as the tired horses could go.

It did not once occur to him that he was taking away the property of another, but he only thought of preventing the

possibility of pursuit.

"Poor Buck," he said aloud, as he dashed onward, and the tears rose to his eyes as he thought of the fate of his dearly loved friend. "How can I tell the boys of his death, and what will they think of me for deserting him so? I wish now that I had stayed with him and shared in the calamity."

Regarding Senor Llorente, the hope that Harry had as he ran from the canyon was the fact.

The stranger had been walking leisurely toward the camp which he had deserted, when the explosion came,

With a cry of fright, he leaped into the air as though he

had been shot, falling upon his knees in a state of absolute

What had happened? What horrible thing had transpired in the solitude of that mountain-locked valley? Was it a vo cano? an earthquake? had the world come to an end?

He was speechless, paralyzed with consternation and fright. The bright flash, which, for the fraction of a second, had lighted up the mountains, filled him with dread, and for fully ten minutes he remained there upon his knees, trembling and herror-stricken.

And then he rose to his feet. The silence which followed the shock was as awful as had been the explosion, and his fear taking different shape, he started to run, hurrying as fast as he could go in the direction which he had been pur-

A short run brought him to the fire, and there he came to a sudden stop.

Where were the boys whom he had left there asleep?"

"Ah," he thought, "frightened like myself, they have fled." And then he began to look about him more carefully, and he saw that the blankets were gone also. Ay! and two of the saddles. His own was still there, but the other two were missing.

"They have gone," he exclaimed, "but they have left my saddle," and he put his fingers to his mouth and whistled

"If Sancho hears me he will come," he murmured, in evident doubt as to whether his horse was near enough to hear

Again and again he whistled, but the horse did not come,

and then he hurried to the spot where they had been left the evening before.

An hour's search revealed nothing, but he never once desisted, wandering over the plain whistling and calling until daylight began to appear.

He had at first thought that perhaps his horse had galloped off after the others, and would soon return, but by the time daylight had come and he could see no signs of his faithful animal, another conclusion forced itself upon him.

"They have taken my horse with them," he thought. "Can it be that those boys had aught to do with that terrible ex-plosion of the night?"

Still, with traces of great fear upon his countenance, he

turned his steps toward the canyon again.
"They are, of course, safe," he said to himself. "I will rejoin them," and he hurried down the canyon toward the place where he had left his friends; where he had held the conference.

Suddenly he stopped.

He could go no further, for there before him rose an impassable barrier, which no man, however agile, could surmount unaided.

He rubbed his eyes and looked again.

No, he was not mistaken. The cliff on one side of the canyon seemed to have toppled over into the ravine, filling it the morning. completely.

CHAPTER XIL

THE HIDDEN ARROW.

Darkness had settled down upon the earth, the fire was ablaze, lighting up the canyon brilliantly, and Jim was still alone, for neither Paul nor Charlie had returned.

Jim was not afraid; no one ever accused him of that; but he had a morbid dislike to being alone; he would far rather face a deadly peril than be compelled to put up with his own ociety for any considerable length of time.

He had been looking at his watch for every five minutes

and grumbling to himself, for the past three hours.

Regarding Paul he was really troubled, for he was afraid t at the fear he had expressed to him before he left had been realized, and that the brave but stubborn leader of their e ged ton had been either slain or captured. So far as Charle wa concerned, he was angry, for he put down the romappearance of the latter as nothing more nor less than n' rtional.

burdent the ilence in the canyon was broken, and Jim cone part heat the lound of a horse's hoofs upon the

One or e," aid J'm to him elf as he got his rifle real left afoot."

The sound came nearer and nearer, and then around the bend in the canyon dashed a horse and rider.

As the reader knows, it was Paul.

"Hurray!" shouted Jim, beginning to clamber down from his perch.

By the time he was at the bottom Paul had reached the spot, and sprang from the saddle.

The two young men clasped each other's hands heartily. "Paul," said Jim, "I had about given you up for dead or captured."

"I was captured by Rubio," replied Paul, "but I have escaped on one of his own horses, and here I am."

Pemberton then related all that had happened to him,

saying in conclusion: "We will go to camp now, for I am certain that we will not

be attacked to-night. Where is Charlie?"

'I don't know.'

"Hasn't he been here?"

"No; and I am as hungry as a bear."

"What can have detained him?" "I haven't the least idea."

"Perhaps we will find him at the camp awaiting us," said Paul, starting down the canyon, leading the horse as he went. "Come, Jim."

"Are you sure that it is safe to leave this canyon unguarded?" asked Jim.

"Perfectly."

"What makes you so sure?"

"The girl told me that we should be attacked to-morrow night, and consequently we are safe to-night.' .

"You are willing to risk it?"

"Thoroughly."

"Well, I don't like it, but you're captain, and I suppose you know what you are talking about; and, anyhow, I am

bound for something to eat.'

"Grumbling is your greatest accomplishment, Jim," said Paul, smiling, "so jump into the saddle and hurry on ahead. Perhaps a stomach full will make you feel better. Come, up you go," as Jim, nothing loath, raised his foot for a mount, and in a moment more Paul was again alone and afoot.

Who could the young girl be who had performed such a service for him? was his constant thought. Did Rubio speak the truth when he said she was his daughter? Could it be that such a beautiful creature was the offspring of a malformation like Rubio? It was hard to believe. And yet he had said so, and she, as if ashamed to confess her relationship to such a man, had hesitated, and by implication refused to give her last name.

Clarita.

"A pretty name," mused Paul, "and a beautiful face, but

terrible surroundings for a girl."

Presently he reached the camp and was very much surprised and rather startled to learn that Charlie had not been there—had not, in fact, been to the camp since he left it in

"What can have happened?" thought Paul.

"Perhaps his horse has thrown him," suggested Jim, but

Paul shook his head.

"No," he said, "Charlie is too good a horseman to be thrown, and moreover, if such were the case, the horse would have returned. No, I am inclined to think that he is all right, only something has occurred to delay him."

"Hark!" cried Jim, at that moment. "Do you not hear a house?"

Paul dropped quickly upon his hands and knees, placing his ear to the ground.

"Plainly," he said, springing up. "It is Charlie, beyond doubt, and just in time for the feed, ch?"

Meantime the clatter of a horse's hoofs was coming nearer and nearer, and presently Charlie dashed into the circle of firelight without his hat, his horse covered with foam, and panting heavily.

Paul and Jim leaped toward him, thinking that something

unpleasant had transpired.

As for Charlie, he was out of breath, and evidently greatly excited.

"What has happened?" cried Paul and Jim together.

"I have found the arrow that points to the one hundred chests of gold!" exclaimed Charlie triumphantly, and he leaped from his horse and threw his arms around Jim's neck in his excess of joy.

"Found the arrow!" cried Paul, breathlessly. "Where?" "Just where you said we would find it, though it was inside instead of under a stone. I went out to-day determined to

search until dark, and to search thoroughly, and so I got down from the horse and walked, following a zigzag course. I kept that up until dark, boys, allowing the horse to feed himself as we wandered along.

"When it began to get dark, I was fully eighteen or twenty miles from here, and I had just made up my mind to give up the search and return, and had, in fact, called my horse to me for that purpose, when I spied something not far from me that attracted my attention. It was a large stone in the form of a cube, and it seemed to be standing on one corner, which struck me as very strange.

"Accordingly I approached it, and made a careful examination; but it was nothing more nor less than what I had thought it—a peculiar stone in a still more peculiar position.

"It was getting quite dark, and so I mounted my horse to as I turned him suddenly about, he came in contact with the stone, and, quicker than a flash, kicked it, and as truly as I am here to relate it, the stone parted in the middle, and this dropped out," and he held up a peculiar-looking arrow for the inspection of the others.

"What!" cried Paul, "you brought it away?"

"Certainly I did," said Charlie; "but I took good care to

first notice how it pointed, and to-morrow, as soon as it is light, we will have nothing to do but find the buried secret and profit by it."

"But how can you tell how it pointed when concealed in the stone?" asked Jim.

"By Jove! I hadn't thought of that," exclaimed Charlie, in

"It seems to me that we are not much nearer the solution of this thing than before," Jim continued, not noticing the blank look upon Charlie's face. "The stone was evidently made to be taken apart, and the arrow placed in it for the purpose of pointing out the way to the Aztec's treasure, but I do not believe that the stone was 'stood on its head,' so to speak, by the Aztec, and that it has remained there all these centuries; no, sir! Some convulsion of nature has turned that stone over ,and set it up on end."

"Anyway," said Paul, "we will go and look at it to-morrow, and as for Charlie, the credit is his for having found the stone and the hidden arrow."

stone and the hidden arrow."

All three were tired and sleepy, and so, after exchanging a few more comments upon the subject, they repaired to the tent and were soon dreaming of stones and arrows and Aztecs; earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and washouts, all alike blissfully unconscious of the danger that was menacing

But they were in peril, which with every moment became greater, for as the boys composed themselves to sleep, way back in the canyon silent forms were stealing past the nearly burnt-out fire which Paul and Jim had left; silent figures, led by one who was short of stature and uncouth, but whom Paul, could he have seen him, would have easily recognized as Rubio.

The men who followed him numbered fully a score, and foremost among them was one whose head was bandaged tightly, for the army saber in Paul's strong hand had torn

away his left ear and a part of his scalp.

CHAPTER XIII.

CLARITA'S FLIGHT—"VENGA ACA!"

The silent, tottering figure which staggered along the pathway toward the bandit's camp, after having been stricken down by the army saber in Paul's strong right hand, was that of a thoroughly despised suitor for the hand of Clarita. He was the fate that she dreaded; he was the ultimatum

which she had to expect if some circumstance of which she knew absolutely nothing (and in the existence of which she had little faith) did not soon transpire.

His name was Ronaldo Lacava, and by birth and education he was far above his associates, but a crime committed, a sentence passed, and an escape consummated, summed up his previous history, and Rubio had speedily discovered in him valuable qualifications in his line of business.

Lacava was an accomplished, as well as a desperate character, and among his possessions was a little secret cache where he concealed such valuables as he could lay his hands on, away from the sight and knowledge of anybody; and he

by the faithful-or, as he would have termed it, unfaithful Clarita—and he had dropped behind the first place of conceal-

ment, and waited and listened.

Clarita saw him rise up, and recognizing him instantly, she turned instinctively and fled like a startled fawn. But as showent she heard the dull thud of the blow that had been struck, and an instant later the sound of a horse's hoofs upon the gravel, and she knew that Paul had escaped, and believed that he had killed Lacava.

So she sped onward to the camp, or pueblo (town), as the bandits termed it, and succeeded, without much trouble, and by exercising a little caution, in reaching her own apartment

in the adobe house, without being discovered.

There she threw herself upon the narrow, hard bed, and

burst into tears.

Had she been asked why she wept, she could not have told, for she did not know; but it was the result of overwrought nerves, and the satisfaction which she felt at having

been the means of saving another life.

Another life? Yes, she had saved several, and the last time had been warned that, when it occurred again, her own life must pay the forfeit. She well knew that if Ronaldo Lessan hand hered again, here were also as a several several again. Lacava should recover and return to camp, she would be at

his mercy

While she lay there, thinking what it would be best for her to do in an emergency, she suddenly heard the footsteps of Lacava as he came boldly and impudently to her window, which was scarcely larger than her head, and tapped upon it.
She did not answer, and he tapped again.
"What do you want?" she asked of him then, without

"I want to speak with you, senorita," said the man, who was weak from the effects of the blow he had received.

"Speak on," said Clarita, simply.

"I saw you to-night," he said.

"Well?"

"You were assisting the prisoner to escape on one of your father's horses."
"Well?"

"Shall I tell Rubio?" "Why do you ask me?"

"Because it is for you to say."

"How so?"

"You know well enough," cried the man eagerly. "You have but to say-

"Hush, senor; my answer is-tell Rubio."

Lacava started back.

"You know the consequences, and yet say to me, tell Rubio," he asked.
"I do."

"Your life will be forfeited."

"Well, there are things worse than death; your presence, for instance; go, leave me."

Without a word more, but livid with rage, he turned and departed, forgetting his wound in his disappointment and

Lacava had no sooner left her window than Clarita sprang

from her couch, all life and energy.

She realized the danger, and knew that she must be pre-

pared to meet it.

For months Clarita had foreseen the time when she would be forced to fly from her surroundings in order to preserve her life, and she had, in a measure, prepared herself for the ordeal by manufacturing secretly a male attire in which she now began to clothe herself.

A few moments sufficed to make the change, and with flushed check but firm step she passed once more out into

the night.

It was her intention to hurry back to the corral, secure another horse and fly; but where she would go, or what she would do was a very vague quantity in her mind beyond the indistinct idea that she would get through the valley and canyon, and in some way reach the city of Durango or Culiacan; the former place, probably, for the way was, to a certain extent, familiar to her, and the distance shorter.

With such indistinct ideas floating through her excited mind, she slipped around the corner of the house, just in time to hear Rubio, who was approaching with one of his men, sav:

"Get the horses out as quickly as possible, and we will teach these American fools what it means to defy Rubio."

Clarita well knew that unless Lacava had the opportunity was just returning from a little visit to that interesting spot to tell Rubio at once, her absence would not be discovered, when he both heard and saw the approach of our hero, led She also realized that she had no time to lose if she got a say before the others started; and she fairly flew over the and she led them into a sort of tunnel which extended through so ce that divided her from the corral.

It was but the work of a moment for her, accustomed as she was from infancy to her wild mountain life, to secure a was one of the very best, and not likely to be missed.

Once ready she seized him by the bit and led him swiftly d in the path along which she had so lately piloted Paul.

Clarita mounted at the same spot where she had left the cun, American, and as she did so the sound of voices together with the stamping and whinnying of horses, told her plainly that the bandits were but a few moments behind her.

The beautiful horse she rode knew the path through the canyon perfectly, and when she gave him the rein he started

away at a swift gallop through the darness.

On she went, silently but for the noise of the horse's hoofs, intent upon carrying the warning to the young American whose life she had saved, and who had interested her so much. The double purpose of her flight—the desire to warn the boys and to escape from the danger which menaced hergave to her the nerve power necessary for the unusual

Dim and distant, like a shadow in Clarita's memory, floated at times the faint, aye, almost indiscernible vision of another life from that which she had been forced to lead ever since recollection had become an established fact within her. Sometimes in her dreams she wandered back to a beautiful room, surrounded by flower-crowded balconies, and imagined herself a child, playing there; but the vision faded away; the perfume of the flowers vanished, and she awoke to find herself in the mountain retreat which she had been taught to call home, and in the presence of a being whom she could neither respect nor love, and yet who proclaimed himself her father.

"Can that man—that dwarf—the bandit Rubio, be my father?" she had asked herself many times; and while she could not really doubt it, yet the romantic nature within her had often pictured another home, much more beautiful than the bandit's retreat, from which she had, one unfortunate day, been stolen; and as she rode madly on through the black darkness of the canyon it occurred to her in a vague sort of way that she would go to the city and search for her real parents; those for whom she could feel love and respect.

The walls of the canyon were suddenly left behind her, and the dashed out upon the star-lit plain, guiding her horse straight toward the American boys' camp.

"Awake!" she cried, in her loudest tone, as she neared the

tent, and almost instantly Paul sprang out of the tent.

"Who are you?" cried Paul, seeing that there was but one figure in the starlight before him, and instantly realizing that there was no immediate danger to be apprehended.

"I am Clarita," she replied, "and I have come to warm you."

"Clarita!" cried Paul, for he had not recognized her in the masculine costume she wore. "How did you get here,

and why?"

And then the beautiful girl, resting her hand upon the liken mane of her horse, breathlessly and rapidly related the ecidents which had transpired after she and Paul had parted, concluding:

"And even now Rubio and his men are hurrying here to kill

you all."

By the time her story was finished, both Jim and Charlie

had issued from the tent and were standing near.
"What is to be done?" cried Paul, who could not forgive nim elf for having allowed the canyon to be left unguarded. The question was easy enough to ask, but very difficult

to answer.

Suggestions flew rapidly from one to the other, but none seemed practicable, and they had just about concluded to ren ain where they were, and fight it out as best they could, en Clarita spoke again.

If the senors will trust me," she said, "I will lead them o a place of safety where the bandits cannot find them. Venga aca."

The boy, hurriedly mounted their horses and set off with

(arita.

n a .hort time they came across a solitary figure, which ed to be Harry. When asked as to where Buck was, he term the a vful truth. They could not blame Harry for et la cid.

The four boy and the girl continued their flight until they el de foot of a mountain, and then the girl pulled up and log d to the ground. The rest did likewise, himself upon the spears.

the mountain, and they soon came out into a beautiful valley, in which was a lake and beside it a queer-looking house. They entered it and, after finding themselves the only occupants, sadde and bridle and put them upon her own horse, which they stretched themselves out on the floor and soon were asleep.

The next day, while they were looking around outside, they saw somebody approaching, and, wonder of wonders, who should it be but Buck Lovel. He was completely done up.

They all rushed to his assistance.

It appeared that when the explosion had occurred the rock which held him became loosened and he dropped into the same tunnel which the others had come through. He had seen the queer Aztec temple, but had passed the time nursing his wounds in a little wood some distance from it.

By a strange circumstance, Rubio and the bandits had also discovered the strange tunnel in their pursuit of our friends. And also Llorente and the Rurales had done the same thing. But Llorente and the Rurales had discovered it some hours previously and had passed through. After spending some time in the valley they started back through the tunnel at the same time that Rubio and the bandits started from the other end.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE TEMPLE.

Let us look back into "Treasure Valley," as Paul named it, where our friends were relating their adventures to each other.

When dinner had been eaten, Paul rose to his feet.

"Come, friends," he said, "arise and buckle on your armor, and we will attack the temple of the heathen gods and deities. In other words, we will see what the temple contains," and then he explained in Spanish to Clarita what had brought them to the country and what they expected to find in the

temple which she had discovered for them.

If the treasure is there we will all share alike," he concluded. "Even Manuelito shall have as much as anyone, for

he has been faithful."

And so they began their march to the temple.

The building was octagonal in shape, and was built of stone, fastened together with a cement which seemed harder than the stone itself.

It was not more than two hundred feet in diameter, and there were four doors, or rather doorways—one at the north side, one at the south side, and the others looked east and west respectively.

On the top of the building in the center was a large ornament, which resembled an urn, and which the boys afterward discovered to be the place of sacrifice; the place where the fire was built, and where the still quivering body of the butchered Aztec sacrifice to idolatry was roasted for their religious suppers.

Each octagon of the building contained a window, or hole, large enough to admit considerable light to the inside of the edifice, and as the party entered the ancient structure the afternoon sun, streaming through one of the windows, lit up the ugly figure of an Aztec god which stood in the center of

the building.

Its head was surmounted by a crown of gold, from which projected thirteen solid silver spears several feet in length. Both hands of the god were extended, grasping a shield made of wrought gold, with the hollow side turned up as if to receive offerings, much as the silver plate is passed at church service nowadays.

The god was standing upon a pedestal which was raised about three feet from the floor, the material appearing to be of solid rock,

pedestal to the crown from which the silver spears projected, Jim calculated that it would measure ten feet, and that he could, by springing into the air, seize one of them easily.

The idea struck him that it would be jolly to clamber to the top of the gol and sit upon his crown, and so, without topping to think twice, he sprang on to the pedestal, and from there leaped into the air.

"Hoop la!" he cried, swinging back and forth for an instant, in order to give himself the impetus necessary to throw

Was it fancy, or did the god move?

Suddenly doubt was dispelled, for with a loud snap, the figure shot rapidly downward.

The god, spears, pedestal, all—with Jim included, had disappeared through the floor of the temple.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE DEPTHS.

For a moment after the Aztec god and Jim had disappeared through the floor of the temple perfect silence reigned, and then Paul leaped quickly forward to look down the abyss into which they had fallen.

For an instant all was darkness; the place seemed bottom-less; and then he thought he could indistinctly discern some-

thing. A second more satisfied him.

It was the head of the idol slowly reappearing, and cling-

ing to the silver spear was Jim.

Slowly it rose, until, with a sharp click, it reached its original position and stopped; and Jim, with his hair standing on end and his face as pale as death, dropped, almost

paralyzed with fear, to the floor.

With one accord they all set up a shout of joy at the unexpected turn which the thing had taken; for when the idol had suddenly disappeared through the floor with its human burden not one of them had ever expected to see their friend alive again. They had suspected that some trap, set by the old high priest of the Aztecs to catch the two curious ones, had caught Jim, and mercy from the heathen god was the last thing they looked for.

Clarita was so delighted that she clapped her hands for

They all gathered eagerly around Jim and began to ques-

tion him.

"Whew!" whistled Jim, when he had partially recovered, "how long was I gone on that trip, eh? Fully an hour, wasn't it?"

"Two or three minutes, I should think," said Paul

"Two or three weeks, more likely!" cried Jim with disgust. "I tell you, fellows, if you want to feel your hair turn into porcupine quills, and goose-flesh as big as carbuncles come out all over you, just jump up and grab hold of that spear," and he shuddered as he thought of his adventure.

"Where did you go?" asked Harry.

Lim glanced shout him with supposes contenant in his age.

Jim glanced about him with supreme contempt in his eyes for a moment, and then with rather a disdainful air he said:

"I just went down to interview the engineer of that machinery, but the beastly place was so dark that I couldn't find him.

"I tell you what, fellows," he cried, changing his tone, "if you don't believe I hung on to that spear, just look at my hands. I expected every minute to have the whole business tip over with me, but it didn't."

"What did it do?"

"Why, his highness just stopped long enough to shout all aboard, and then began coming up again. When it did that I thought it was going on down, and I was just about to let go the spear and trust to dropping through to Hong Kong or Shanghai, when I saw it was getting lighter, and here I The rest of you may interview the old devil-excuse me, the—ahem!—Aztec god as much as you please, but there is a slight coolness between him and me which declines to be warmed for the future; so far as I am concerned, it will last a life-time." "Nevertheless," remarked Paul, quietly, "I am going to

take the trip.'

"What!" they all cried in concert, except Clarita, who, of course, did not understand.

"I am going to try Jim's experiment," said Paul, simply,

but decidedly.

Jim looked supremely disgusted.

"You always were a fool about some things, Paul," he said, "but there is no necessity for you to develop into a downright idiot in order to convince us of the fact," and he turned and walked majestically away.

Clarita leaned forward and put her hand upon Paul's arm. "What is it?" she asked, in her own language.

Paul told her of his determination, adding that he of course intended taking a light with him, and when she understood she looked greatly alarmed.

"Do not go," she entreated, but Paul was obdurate.

Suddenly her face lighted up.

"Will you let me go with you?" she asked, tremulously, but the young man shook his head.
"Please do me the favor," she entreated. "I am not afraid

-indeed I am not.

Paul, however, would not consent to have her accompany him, and went about making his preparations for the trip. He had resolved to provide himself with plenty of material for making a light, and then to seize hold of the same spear that Jim had grasped. He meant when the idol should stop at the bottom to get off and explore the place, for he was convinced that there was where he would find the one hundred chests of gold.

All the efforts of the others to dissuade him were unavailing, and by the time half an hour had elapsed he had prepared a huge torch, and once more entered the temple.

By his side walked Clarita. She had said nothing more of her desire to accompany him, and Paul had not again thought

of it.

Both Harry and Charlie had offered to go with him, though neither of them relished the idea very much, but he had refused. From Jim, however, he had extracted the promise that if the idol arose again into place without Paul ut at it he would leave it unmolested for two hours and then wo. seize the spear once more and make the descent for the purpose of liberating Pemberton from the vault beneath.

Close at hand stood Clarita, not losing a motion of Paul's. "Remember, Jim," said Paul, warningly, "if the thing comes back all right, you are to come down for me in two

hours."

"All right—I'll come."

"If it doesn't come back, it will probably be because I have found a way to keep it down there until I am ready to return. I think everything will be all right, so good-by," and he sprang into the air, grasping the same spear which Jim had taken.

Instantly the idol began once more to descend, and also at the same instant Clarita leaped into the air and her slender fingers gripped around the spear next to the one to which

Paul was hanging.

The shout of consternation and dismay that went up as she made the sudden move was stifled as soon as begun by surprise at the effect produced by Clarita's action, for she had no sooner got her hands upon the spear than there came another loud click and the idol shot downward with great

Then all was still, and the friends above ground waited anxiously for it to return, but there was no signs of it.

Cautiously Jim approached the opening and looked down, hoping to see the flicker of Paul's torch, but all was of the blackness of night, and he shrank back full of fear for the safety of Paul and Clarita.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SILENT CHAMBER-FOUND AT LAST.

Paul was about to chide Clarita for what she had done, when the effect of her act made itself apparent. The idol shot downward as though the bottom had dropped out of the

temple and it was falling through.
It fell so rapidly that his breath left him for a moment, while the rush of air put out the torch and left them in total

darkness.

The sensation of falling lasted but a moment or two, and

then they came to a stop.

Paul did not dare let go his spear, for he could not tell what would happen. The darkness was absolute, and he waited, expecting every instant that the idol would start again on its upward journey. In that expectation he was disappointed, however, for it

remained perfectly motionless.

"Clarita!" he called, "are you safe?"

"Yes," she replied, "perfectly safe; but my hands are very tired; I cannot hold on much longer."

"Wait!" cried Paul. "I will drop off and strike a light, but don't you loose your hold until I tell you to do so, on any account." any account.

She promised, and then Paul, breathing a prayer for safety, loosened his grasp upon the silver spear.

He, of course, alighted upon the pedestal from which he

and sprung to his perch when in the temple, and it only filled to the brim with ingots of gold about a foot long and gurred a moment for him to feel satisfied that the idol was removable. He struck a match, and with it lighted the torch, at the same moment telling Clarita that all was well, and she was instantly by his side.

Then he held the light high over his, head and peered bout them, and the sight that met their eyes was indeed a

The idol seemed to be resting in the center of a large circular chamber fully a hundred feet in diameter, and as Paul waved the torch over his head, the light was reflected back to him from a thousand different places on the walls of the chamber, by what appeared to be mirrors, but which he afterwards discovered were huge plates or salvers of solid silver hung upon the walls. There were one hundred of them, for he and Clarita stepped down from the pedestal of the idol and counted them. Great, beautiful plates of silver, inlaid with gold, and each with a picture graven upon it.

Beneath each one stood a stone idol.

"It is here that we will find the chests of gold," thought Paul, as he peered about him. "Here in this chamber they are unquestionably concealed."

He took Clarita by the hand and led her toward one of the hundred idols, which was facing the idol upon which they

had made the descent.

It was an uncouth, ungainly-looking object, not more than four feet in height in itself; but, placed upon a square pedestal fully two feet high, it had the appearance of being much taller. It was made of stone, and on its head was a silver helmet, and in its right hand, brandished as if to strike, was a silver spear, not unlike those on the big idol, only

Passing to the next, Paul found it to be very nearly like the first, and so on until they had made the circuit of the

chamber.

Each one of the idols was brandishing a spear as if to strike, and each was standing upon a square, box-like looking pedestal about two feet in height. In those particulars there was no difference.

"They are the same," murmured Clarita, who was deeply

interested.

"Very nearly so," returned Paul.

"What are you so puzzled about?" asked the girl, presently, noticing that Paul was busying his mind over some

"I am wondering how to go to work in order to find the chests of gold with the least possible work," he replied. "That they are here in this chamber I am satisfied; but where

"Buried, perhaps, under the floor," ventured Clarita.

"Ay, but what part? Under the idol that brought us down here, or—— By Jove. I think I have it!"

"What do you mean?"

'This: there are exactly one hundred of those small idols arranged around this chamber, and we are looking for one hundred chests of gold. Everything points to the hidingplace of the gold as here, and therefore each one of those stone images must guard a chest of treasure which is either buried in front of it or immeditely under it.

"Paul," said Clarita timidly, "why not seize hold of one of the spears and see if it will do anything? The big idol brought us down here because we grasped the silver spears, and they may be placed in the hands of these smaller ones for some purpose."

"A good idea," commented Paul, "and I will try it." Clarita took the torch while he stepped forward and braced himself for the trial, for he did not know what might

With a backward glance to see that Clarita was safe, he seized the spear in both hands and pulled with all his

trength, but with no visible effect.

Wating a moment he tried again, and this time there was a perceptible consequence, for the idol toppled and fell over forward, nearly crushing him as it did so, only that he sprang nimbly to one side in time to avoid it.

"Look!" cried Clarita, excitedly, and pointing toward the

pot where the image had stood.

Paul looked, and caw that the pedestal upon which it had tood 'a hollow, and that something yellow reflected the light of the torch.

He prang forward eagerly, and with a cry of joy.

Ye, to wa right. tone, o clay that had hardened into stone, and it was

as large as the big end of a carrot.

"Victory!" cried Paul. "I have succeeded, and my translation of the document is proved to be correct, for here is one of the hundred chests of gold, and there, under those idols, are the other ninety-nine."

The ingots had evidently all been run in the same mold,

for they were of the same size and shape throughout.

"Now for the others!" he cried, approaching the next one,

but the hand of Clarita detained him.

"What is it?" he asked, pausing.

"Had we not better try to get out of here before looking for more gold?" she asked. "The torch is getting low; and will not last much longer."

"You are right, and I am a feel not to have thought of

"You are right, and I am a fool not to have thought of it myself," returned Paul. "Come, we will search the idol for the spring or bar which will carry it and us back to the

floor of the temple again."

They turned, and Paul once more raised the torch over his head as they started toward the center of the chamber.

Suddenly, however, they came to an abrupt halt, while Paul rubbed his eyes and then looked again with an expression of the utmost dismay. As for Clarita, she uttered a sharp car

of fright and faltered backward a step or two, trembling. Well she might, for the huge idol had disappeared as silently and as mysteriously as a bat flies through the dark-

ness of night.

Not a sound had attracted the attention of either one of

them, and yet it had effectually disappeared.
"Never mind," said Paul reassuringly, "the boys will come down for us; Jim will do as I asked him."

But he did not know that Jim at that very instant was trying in vain to make the idol work, to carry him down to his friends.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HUNDRED CHESTS—A DISASTER.

It was even so. While those who were left behind in the temple were awaiting the return of Paul and Clarita on the idol, the head of the Aztec god suddenly appeared through the opening.

All looked eagerly for the figures of their friends, but in a moment realized that they were not there, that they had

been left in the darkness below.

It was impossible to decide whether it was accident or design that had allowed the idol to return without them, but the fact remained, and Jim, after looking at his watch, set himself to wait out the two hours agreed upon, when he was to spring on the spear and once more make the descent.

All idea of fear had vanished entirely from his mind in his anxiety for the welfare of the two venturesome friends.

So they waited on, and at last the two hours were past, and solemnly shaking hands all around he sprang upon the pedestal. This time, however, there was no effect from

In vain he struggled and jounced upon the silver bar, for the idol remained as still as though it had hever left its perch

on the temple floor.

With a groan of dismay Jim dropped to the pedestal. "Why don't you try the other spears?" asked Harry. "What's the use?" asked Jim in return. "The thing won't

move by the same force that moved it before. If you want to go through a set of gymnastics on those silver bars just jump up there and try it on."

"Jim," said Harry presently, "suppose you and I get each a couple of torches all ready to light, and then we get on the idol together. Buck and Charlie can stay here and wait for us while we go for Paul and Clarita."

"All right. But you'll find the thing won't budge." Without another word Harry set about getting the torches ready, giving two to Jim and keeping two for himself.
"Come, Jim!" he cried, when all was in readiness, aboard! vamanos!"

Jim looked about him rather disgustedly for an instant. "I feel rather cheap," he said, "after the affecting adieu l made a little while ago, to do the thing all over again, but here goes. I say, Buck and Charley, if I don't come backhello!

He turned to follow Harry, who was standing upon the

pedestal, but as he did so it began to slowly sink.

"The thing is going it alone!" cried Harry, excitedly. "Hurry, Jim, hurry!"

Though it had started slowly enough, the idol seemed to keep going a little faster, and by the time Jim realized what was taking place the spears were on a level with the moor

where he was standing.

To think was to act, and with a shout to Harry that he was with him, Jim leaped into the air, alighting astride of one of the silver spears, where he clung tightly as the Aztec god once more sank rapidly from sight through the floor of the temple.

Charlie and Buck were pale with excitement, and were anxious as to the result of this adventure.

They were about to leave the temple, but suddenly the sharp click which was beginning to have a familiar sound smote upon their ears.

Turning quickly, they were surpriesd to see the idol once

more in place, looking as grim and uninviting as ever.

Where were their friends, Paul and Clarita, Harry and Jim? Into what abyss had they been precipitated. What dreadful fate had they encountered in that dismal hole beneath the temple?"

The inquiries flew from one to the other, but without satisfactory reply. It was hard to tell what to do.

They had come to no conclusion when the image began to sink once more, at first slowly, and then more rapidly, until it had again disappeared.

"It runs like an elevator," muttered Buck. "I wonder if it will come back again? Let us wait and see."

So they waited in perfect silence.
Five, ten, twenty minutes—a half hour passed away.
"There it comes!" suddenly cried Charlie.

Sure enough, it was once more ascending through the floor. Slowly but surely coming to the top again

First the head and spears, then the shoulders, and then the

solid pedestal upon which the idol rested.

But that was not what made both Buck and Charlie set up a shout of joy-it was what they saw on the pedestal.

It was Jim and Clarita, standing there together, while piled around them in promiscuous heaps were ingots of solid gold.

There was a broad grin on Jim's face as the idol came

to a stop.

"Here we are again!" he cried, with a comical grimace. "We have found out how to work this thing from below, and so I've brought up one load, and am going down for the rest of it."

"Have you found the gold?" they cried together, breath-

lessly.

"Looks rather like it, doesn't it?" asked Jim, disdainfully,
"I only brought up five chests this trip; there are ninety-five
more down there. Come, you fellows, and help pitch it off,
will you, so we can go back for more."

It did not take their eager hands long to unload the ped-

It did not take their eager hands long to unload the ped-

estal of its precious burden.

"Now, Clarita," said Jim, "you had better remain here while we go down and get the rest of the boodle."

She assented, and the boys stepped upon the stone platform to make the descent,

Charlie, eager to start, leaped up and seized one of the silver spears; one that had not been touched before.

There was a sudden shock and then the idol shot downward like lightning, striking the bottom of the shaft with such force that it was overturned, nearly crushing Paul and Harry,

who were standing near, awaiting it.

There they were, at the bottom of the shaft, with their means of ascent destroyed, for the idol, lying prone upon its

ce, was evidently useless for their purposes. With the ransom of nations lying in ingots of gold about them, they were apparently helpless, and Clarita was alone in the temple above.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LAYING PLANS.

Consternation and dismay were plainly depicted upon every countenance when the Aztec god struck the floor of the shaft with such force that it toppled over, evidently cut-

ting off all hope of escape from the treasure chamber.

"Let us try to find the machinery which runs this thing," suggested Jim. "There may be some way of righting the individual, and persuading him to carry us up aloft once more."

"A good idea," commented Paul.

They had been around the chamber many times before in their examination of the smaller idols which stood guard over the hundred chests, and had noticed a small opening in the wall near one of them. Toward that spot Paul at once led the way, carrying the torch high over his head.

The opening was very small, but by stooping he managed to work his large body through it, and found that after traversing a distance of about ten feet, he emerged into another chamber, larger than the first.

Raising the torch on high, he discovered what to him was the most curious piece of Aztec workmanship which he had

yet seen. It was a huge rock, weighing several tons, and running from the top of it, upward until it disappeared in the darkness, was a chain made of a combination of stone and metal, and fastened together in a most curious way. Another very peculiar thing was also noticeable: the weight, for such it was, was exactly one-half the size of the chamber in which they were standing.

Throwing the light of the torch from side to side, they at length discovered, in the mouth of the passageway from

which they had just emerged, two long silver bars, not unlike the spears on the head of the god.

"I think I see through this enigma," murmured Paul.

"Stand back into the passageway, fellows, while I move this

They obeyed him silently, and as soon as all were clear of the chamber our hero seized one of the bars and began

working at it.

For some time it refused to move, but by dint of digging away some dirt that had accumulated around it at the bottom, it at last was forced from its position.

No result followed, however.
"Boys," said Paul, "we have but one hope left, and that hope lies in that other bar. There is one huge weight at the bottom of this shaft, and another at the top, I believe, and by some principle of mechanism which I do not now understand, they pull each other up and down, dragging the idol with them. The lever we have just been struggling with is probably the one connected with the weight that is now at the bottom, so we will try the other one." the bottom, so we will try the other one.'

Then followed more digging and more hoping that their

efforts would meet with success.

All their strength seemed to be inadequate to move the

lever, however; it remained solidly fast.
Finally, when they were about despairing, Charlie suggested that they might all get hold together and give it one more try.

They did so, and the lever moved. It moved ever so litle, then more and more, until it was pulled way over as the other one had been.

A grating sound smote their ears rather harshly, and the light of the torch was thrown out into the chamber once more just in time to see the huge rock to which Paul had referred slowly making its way upward in the darkness of the shaft.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" cried Harry excitedly, and seizing the torch he dashed away through the passage toward the treasure chamber, leaving his friends in total darkness, notwithstanding Paul's cry for him to stop.

In a moment more they could hear him shouting, and they now hurried after him as best they could in the intense darkness, emerging into the Treasure Chamber to find him dancing about like a wild man, and shouting at the top of

"Hurrah—hurrah—hurrah!"

The cause of his strange conduct was apparent to all the moment they entered the place where he was.

The idol was gone!

That fact was enough to insure them the means of escape. They had but to return and move the other lever, and down it would come again ready to transport them and their gold to the top in perfect safety.

Without a word, Jim took the torch, which was almost burned out, and hurried back into the passage, and in a moment more returned.

And then all eyes were turned upward into the darkness, watching for the idol's return.

Nor were they disappointed, for presently it showed itself, and in a moment more was at its former landing-place un right, and in apparently as perfect order as it was before

"Load up, boys," he continued. "We will move the gol!

I to the temple above, and then bid good-by to the chambers

and shafts. They are interesting, but dangerous.

So they piled on the contents of ten of the chests, and went up with them into the temple above to find that darkness had settled over the land, and that Clarita, with an eye to their comfort, had a smoking hot supper prepared for them.

That night by the fire they laid their plans for the future conduct of the party. There was more than gold enough in the temple and under it to make them all independently rich for the rest of their lives, but the difficulty lay in transporting it to a place where it could be made useful. It was of

no value whatever where it had lain so many years. But how were they to get it out of the valley and escape the lawless band of outlaws headed by the justly feared and dreaded Rubio? Again, even if Rubio were not there, how were they to transport it? True, they had enough mules with them to carry considerable of the gold away, but when compared with what they must leave behind, it was as nothing.

They talked the matter over until far into the night, and the conclusion finally arrived at and agreed upon between

them was as follows:

Jim, with Harry and Charlie, were to repair to the temple early in the morning and employ their time in moving the remainder of the gold to the floor of the temple, while Paul and Buck, who had sufficiently recovered from his experience in the explosion to be almost as good as new, were to ride out into the valley to discover if there were any signs of Rubio and his men about. If not, they were to return, and then the whole party was to conclude upon some means of escape from the country.

That once accomplished, they were to proceed at once to some city where they could engage a force of men at sufficiently large pay to return with them and take away the gold.

CHAPTER XIX.

A PRICELESS TREASURE-A DISCOVERY.

As soon as dawn appeared the boys, were up and astir, Jim and Harry and Charlie repairing at once to the temple to complete the work begun the day before, while Paul and Buck mounted their horses and started for the underground passage, leading to the outer valley

Not, however, before Clarita had laid her hand softly upon Paul's arm, and looking up at him with tears in her great

dreamy eyes, had said in her musical tongue:

'You will return to me?"

And Paul, who had discovered the secret of his own heart when he had supposed himself lost in the treasure chamber the evening before, and forgetting that Buck was looking on in amused silence, had clasped Clarita closely in his arms

and whispered her name tenderly.
"Yes, I will come back to you," he murmured, as he kissed away the tears from her eyes, "and then we will escape forever from these wilds, and I will take you home to my mother, where you will be the most priceless treasure I have yet

found or will ever find."

Then without another word he let her go, and springing

upon the saddle, galloped away toward the tunnel.

The mouth of the canyon was nearly reached when sud-

denly Paul pulled his horse up short. "What's the matter?" asked Buck.

"I could swear that I heard a rifle then," replied Paul.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Buck. "I heard nothing."
"Listen," said Paul, simply. "Perhaps there may be another." But after listening for several moments they jogged onward again.

A quarter of a mile had been traversed, when suddenly

both young men stopped still.

There was no mistaking it this time, for it was more than a ingle hot that broke the silence of the morning; it was a rapid, rattling di charge.

Crack, crack, crackety-crack, crack, crack! and it continued

without cea ing this time.

Something i going on in there," exlaimed Buck.

Eldently," replied Paul. "What can it be? Do you support that Rubo' men have got to fighting among them-

"'o ctaing i going on in there," exclaimed Buck.
-Look there!' cred Paul, pointing ahead of them; and

there, riding out from the entrance to the canyon were five horsemen, spurring their beasts to their utmost speed, as if anxious to escape from something.

One of them turned and fired from his saddle as he went, and then Paul saw, emerging from the head of the ravine, several men clad in buckskin suits. They were on foot, but they were running rapidly, and firing as they ran, and one of the escaping horsemen threw up his hands and fell to the plain, while his horse dashed wildly away riderless.

"The Rurales!" cried Paul, the instant he saw the pursuers, for he recognized them as the fiercest fighters, and therefore the best soldiers of Mexico. "Those fellows escaping are all

that is left of Rubio's band of outlaws."

"Shall we give chase?" asked Buck, glancing at his rifle. "There are only four of them now, and one of them is Rubio himself."

"That's so!" cried Paul. "Yes, after them, Buck!"

Much to the surprise of all concerned except themselves, for they had not been seen before, the two young men dashed away across the plain, intent upon heading off the bandits' escape.

Rubio saw them, and instantly recognized Paul, and his rage knew no bounds. He was so beside himself when he saw that he was hemmed in on all sides that he ran his animal straight toward the two Americans.

Paul stopped his horse and raised his rifle to his shoulder,

Buck following his example.

The two reports sounded upon the air almost simultaneously, and two of Rubio's men reeled in their saddles and fell to the earth, while the third halted and threw up his hands as a sign of surrender.

Not so Rubio. He dashed straight onward toward Paul and Buck, evidently oblivious to everything except that before him was the personage to whom he attributed all his

misfortunes, and he was seeking revenge.

In his right hand was a revolver, which he raised as he came forward.

Paul saw his danger and again raised his rifle, pulling the trigger instantly, but his horse started a trifle just as he did so, thus diverting his aim so that instead of the bullet striking Rubio, as he had intended, it was depressed, and hit the horse which Rubio rode right between the eyes, tumbling him to the ground instantly, and precipitating the bandit chieftain over his head, where he fell in a confused heap and lay as still as death.

Rubio's arm was broken, and he had fainted.

In a moment more the Rurales had joined them, and thanks and congratulations were exchanged.

Rubio and the bandit who had surrendered had been sc-

curely bound, and then they waited for the remainder of the command to approach. Buck, who was quite skilful at surgery, offered his services

to the Rurales in the way of binding up the wounds of those who were hurt, and he and Paul accompanied them back to their camp beyond the barrier.

Some of their number had been killed, and several of them had been severely wounded, and Buck set to work dressing

their injuries.

There was one among them who was not arrayed in the buckskin uniform, and Buck quickly recognized him as Senor Llorente. He was very severely wounded—fatally, in fact, but his faculties were clear as ever. He recognized Buck as once as he bent over him, and began to speak.

Buck called Paul to his side to interpret for him.

"Tell the senor that I am very sorry that I left him so unceremoniously, but that I feared that he and his friends were in some way connected with the bandits and therefore thought it best to consult with my friend, the captain of these soldiers.

"The story I told him was correct. I came here upon the invitation of Rubio, to redeem a child who was stolen from me in infancy—a daughter; but I fear now that I shall never see her."

A daughter!" cried Paul, "and stolen by Rubio?"

"Si, senor," replied Llorente.

"How old would she be now?" asked Paul excitedly.

"She would be nearly eighteen."

"And her name?"

"I had her named Clarita, and the letter from Rubio stated that she bore the name still. But why do you ask these questions, senor? Do you know aught of her?" and the Mexican's face shone with an eagerness that for the moment hid all evidences of pain.
"Aye!" exclaimed Paul. "I know where she is, and more!

I can find and bring her to you. Keep up your courage and strength, Senor Llorente, and in two hours your daughter she be in your arms.'

"Heaven bless you!" murmured Llorente, as Paul, without a word of explanation to anyone, leaped upon his horse and dashed away after Clarita. "I will keep my strength long enough to see my child before I die."

CHAPTER XX.

LLORENTE'S REQUEST-CONCLUSION.

When Paul reached the little valley where Clarita was waiting, a few words sufficed to acquaint her with all that had taken place since he had left her, and without sparing the time to go to the temple and speak with the others, she mounted her horse, and with Paul was soon galloping like the wind toward the canyon where her father lay dying.

She could not remember her father nor her mother, but the knowledge that Rubio's blood did not defile her veins was

ioyous intelligence indeed.

In considerably less than two hours, Paul led Clarita to her father's side, and then, brushing a tear from his eye, he stepped aside and left them together.

"My child-my Clarita!" murmured the dying man as Clarita bent over him, and something in his voice, now husky with pain-something indescribable, brought a flood of memory over Clarita's brain, for at that instant she recognized her father."

"Papa!" she cried, bending over him and kissing his brow, which was cold and damp with approaching death.

"My darling child!" murmured her father, fondly. you but to lose you, for I am dying, my Clarita. R Rubio did his work well, for he has kept you from me all your life. Your mother died of a broken heart because of your loss, and now he has killed me; it is his revenge because your mother

"You are a good child, though, my Clarita, even though you have been in that villain's care. I can see goodness in your eyes and hear it in your voice, and if you would see your mother's most perfect likeness look in your mirror.
"Tell me, Clarita, who is the young man who brought you to me?"

"He is an American who rescued me from Rubio," replied Clarita, blushing warmly. "His name is Paul Pemberton."

"And you, my child, love him. Do not deny it, Clarita, for I see it in your eyes. Does he love you? Has he told you of his love?" and when Clarita nodded assent, he added:

"Call him here that I may speak to him."

Paul came quickly in answer to Clarita's summons, and dropped upon one knee by Llorente's side.

"Senor Pemberton," said the dying man, "I have but a few moments to live, and I have something to say to you. My daughter says she loves you and that you love her. Is it true?" true?

"Entirely so," replied Paul,
"I like your face. Take her, and be good to her, that you may ever live under my blessing. Go to the city of Durango -to Don Manual Revuelta. He knows why I came upon this journey, and he has the management and settlement of my affairs. Give him this," and he handed a beautiful diamond ring to Clarita. "He is a true friend and will care for you until your maying." until your marriage.'

Senor Llorente was sinking rapidly, but his last moments were the happiest he had known in years, for they assured him of the future in store for his daughter. Although he had found her and lost her in the same day, he died knowing that she was in good, true hands where she would be well cared for, and he passed away with a happy smile on his face and a blessing on his lips for his children,

But little more remains to be told in these pages.

Paul and Buck and Clarita returned to the little valley, and soon the others were made acquainted with all that had ranspired that day, and they congratulated both Clarita and

The burros were loaded with their packs, in which were hidden away enough golden ingots for several moderate for-

tunes. That which they were obliged to leave behind them they left openly upon the floor of the temple, having no fear that anyone would find their treasure valley and deprive it of its golden crop.

They would return, they said, in the course of a year, with an army of burros, and take away all there was left of the

As for Paul, he had many sources of congratulation. He had proved the correctness of his deciphering of the Aztec picture-writing-a task which many learned men had utterly failed to accomplish; he had discovered and explored an Aztec temple in which the foot of man had not stepped for centuries—since the Aztec prists themselves had visited it; he had earned for himself and his friends, by reason of his study and perseverance, fortunes which would be sufficient for them and their descendants for many generations; and lastly, but by far the greatest reason for self-congratulation, in his own mind, he had found Clarita Llorente. and he had determined to take her to Durango to Senor Revuelta, and leave her there while he returned to his home in the States with his friends. Then, when they all returned for the balance of the gold, he would claim his bride, and take her north to his mother, and whose arms would be open wide to receive her new daughter.

Such were their plans, and so they were carried out. Rubio and his companion met their just deserts at the end of a rope, for the Rurales hung them without delay immediately after they had buried Clarita's father, just where the canyon opened out into the broad and beautiful valley

And so we leave them all, reader, for you to follow on through the few adventures they had in returning for the gold. Your imagination will picture it quite as correctly as I could tell the story; but before closing I will exhibit the copy of a letter lately received.

"Denver, July 10, 18—.

"My dear Friend.—This is a beautiful city, and we are consequently stopping here much longer than we at first intended. I am intent upon giving Clarita a good idea of our American cities and the customs of our people. She speaks English nearly as well as I do now, and is very happy over the prospect of soon returning from our long journey to the friends at and about our home. Two years is a long time to be away, and it is nearly that since we saw you last, dear old fellow.

Clarita says I can't look for any more treasure without taking her with me; but I reply that in the Aztec country I found not only a hundred chests of gold, but a casket of treasure before which all other values decrease to nothing. Am I correct? I think so at least. Ever yours,

"Paul Pemberton."

Thus our story is concluded. The boys are again in their homes; the treasure secured; the buried secret of the most high priest is a secret no longer, for our friends have found and secured the "One Hundred Chests of Gold."

Next week's issue will contain "PAT MALLOY; OR, AN IRISH BOY'S PLUCK AND LUCK."

SPECIAL NOTICE

Please give your newsdealer a standing order for your weekly copy of "PLUCK AND LUCK." The War Industries Board has asked all publishers to save waste. Newsdealers must, therefore, be informed if you intend to get a copy of this weekly every week, so they will know how many copies to order from us.

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

SNAKE CHARMING

The secrets of snake-charming are much simpler than most people imagine. The snakes to be handled are gorged with food until they become drowsy, or else they are drugged so that their senses are dazed. Sometimes they are kept in iceboxes and the cold puts them in a semi-torpid condition. In either case the snakes are only half alive. In handling the reptile the hand must always grasp it at certain places where the head can be guided and held from the body. This is the hardest thing to learn, but, like everything else, it comes with practice. By dint of dexterity and strength the snake is easily passed from one hand to the other and is allowed to coil about the body. The snake-charmer, however, must always be on the alert. When the snake becomes too lively it is put back in the icebox. In handling a reptile with the fangs in, one requires great strength, as the strain on the system during the performance is very considerable. The grasp and movements must be precise and accurate. There is no room for hesitancy or uncertainty. Most of the snakes handled, however, are harmless, so far as poisoning is concerned.

EARTH EATERS

The Loas of Siam eat earth and enjoy it, just as the German drinks bear, the Frenchman wine and the Englishman his alc. No one knows exactly where they contracted the habit. Perhaps during some time of great famine when there was nothing to devour. At any rate, the habit is strong and rich and poor alike indulge. They prefer it when it is procured near waters, so that it has the taste of fish. It is prepared into a pasty substance and smothered in the ground in a hot fire. It is sold in the markets and stores and is served at dinners and big functions of all kinds. Children, women and men eat it together. Of course, it is dreadfully hard on the digestion and in time produces intense pain and death follows. But, like the opium eater, the dirt eater will beg for his food even at death's door. In some parts of the Kongo the dirt is sold in the hape of apples and oranges, and all kinds are given out—yellow dirt, brown dirt, gray earth and pinkish varieties, too, which is considered a great luxury, indeed.

FOX FARMING IN THE UNITED STATES

Much has been written during the last three or our car regarding the remarkable development ox farming in Canada, especially in Prince Edand I and, where this industry originated. Less monaty har, however, been given to the spread of funnel.

States Department of Agriculture, it is stated that fox ranches are now established in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Oregon, Washington and Alaska. The natural habitat of the red, cross and silver foxes (color phases of the same species) includes the greater part of North America, from central United States northward to and including the treeless tundras. The silver phase, the pelts of which are most valuable, is in general more common as one goes northward, but is very irregular in its distribution. The bulletin above mentioned gives complete directions for raising these animals. The great value of the silver fox has led to extraordinary precautions against their loss. "On the more pretentious ranches the animals are regularly examined by a doctor and guarded by watchmen, bulldogs and burglar alarms. Cats are kept to act as foster mothers to orphan cubs. Foxhounds are trained to overtake and hold without injury foxes that have escaped, and bloodhounds are employed to track thieves."

MAKE YOUR OWN PERFUME

Few people know how easy it is to capture the fragrance of real flowers. Here is the way the Scientific American tells us to do it:

The first step is to secure a glass funnel. small end of this, instead of opening, should be drawn out to a fine point. Some means must be adopted to maintain the funnel in an upright position. A little stand made of wooden uprights and wire will do. Any kinds of highly scented flowers, such as roses, may be gathered; these should be in fresh condition, as just after opening the fragrance is at its best. Place these in a vase filled with water so that they will not wither. Now get some ice and crush this into small fragments, using it to fill up the glass funnel. At the same time place some receptable under the funnel. Sprinkle salt on the ice and then move the flowers and the funnel into close proximity.

After a while it will be seen that the moisture from the atmosphere is condensed on the outside of the funnel, the surface of which is chilled by the ice. The ethereal odor of the flowers combines with this liquid which slowly trickles down by drops into the receptacle. When a sufficient quantity is secured this may be mixed with about an equal quantity of pure alcohol. The mixture should then be placed in bottles, when it will keep for an indefinite time. In this way all kinds of flower perfume may be captured with the greatest case. There are a variety and try in the United States. In a bulletin of things that might take the place of the glass

GOOD READING

AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN DEBT \$16,818,000,000

The total debt of Austria-Hungary last October was 84,090,000,000 crowns (\$16,818,000,000), according to a dispatch from Vienna. Austria's debt was 43,000,000,000 crowns (\$8,600,000,000). commission appointed to investigate the question of German-Austria's share of these liabilities finds its proportion, assuming other states of the former empire will pay their share, amounts to 25,000,000,000 crowns.

CAUGHT IN ICE JAM

The British steamship Nova, which has been employed as a Y. M. C. A. relief ship, running between British ports and Archangel, has been caught in an ice jam, it was learned recently. The Nova was carrying 150 lorries and other supplies valued at \$200,000 for the American and British troops in northern Russia. The goods included 5,000,000 cigarettes, 50 tons of candy, 100 tons of sugar and foodstuffs.

A FLOATING HIPPODROME

A plan to carry amusement to returning soldiers detained at various points in the harbor has been evolved by Charles B. Dillingham and will be put into immediate practice. A huge lighter will be transformed into a stage and circus ring, to be known as the Floating Hippodrome, and various features of the Hippodrome show in New York will be carried thereon to men at quarantine and naval landing stations. Among the acts which will be thus shown will be the Hippodrome elephants, the Hanneford family of equestrians, and the Slayman Ali troupe of acrobats and others. Mark Lawson and George H. Williams, scenic artist and carpenter of the Hippodrome, have begun to transform the lighter into a theater. The barge will meet incoming transports during the mornings, and on Sundays it will be towed to the different stations where troops are being quartered.

\$12,000,000 TAX ON SOFT DRINKS

Legislative leaders in Albany, N. Y., have decided to pass a bill taxing ice cream sodas, sundaes, grape juice, ice cream, frosted sarsaparilla, celery tonic, lemonade and other soft drinks.

Senator Henry M. Sage, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, one of the best informed men on State finances, said that such a measure was

"The excise taxes have been yielding \$24,000,000 annually," said Senator Sage. "This amount must be made up from new sources. We decided that at produces death very quickly.

least half this sum, \$12,000,000, must be raised by taxing ice cream and all soft drinks."

The method of taxation has not been decided. In all likelihood all soda water fountains will be licensed as well as so-called ice cream parlors, and manufacturers of soft drinks and ice cream will be subject to a heavy tax.

NEW PROCESS OF PRESERVING LICHEES

The lichee, one of the most widely known fruits throughout China, is produced in south China, chiefly in the provinces of Fukien and Kwangtung, but also in Szechwan. The fruit of the lichee tree, when plucked, rapidly deteriorates and can be kept in its original state for only three days at most. A plan has been adopted for preserving the fruit by storing it in bamboo after sprinkling with a weak salt solution and sealing both ends of the bamboo with clay. In this manner the fruit remains fresh for about two weeks. Dried lichees are popular in foreign countries. The fruit is dried in two ways by sun and by fire. The sun-dried lichee commands the better price, it having a finer flavor than the fire-dried fruit.

A GIANT BUG

The frog's worst enemy, it has recently been discovered, is the water bug. This is not the same kind of bug which is found in houses, but a large species, which inhabits the tropical waters of both North and South America. This water bug is called a giant by comparison with other bugs, but it is much smaller than any of the frogs on which it preys. Yet so powerful are its legs that it is sure death for the frog that gets within their grasp.

The two principal joints of the forelegs fold down on one another and the stouter of these two has a groove along its front to receive the sharp inner edge of the next joint, much as the blade of a pocketknife folds down. In the pools of tidal waters these giant bugs hide among stones and rubbish, from which they dart rapidly to attack passing frogs and occasionally fishes. The victim is clasped by the bug's forelegs and the deadly beak between its two compound eyes is plunged deep into the flesh.

This is not a case of taking toll merely of the victim's blood, as in the case of many other sucking insects; it is speedily followed by the death of the bug's victim. This appears to be due to a copious supply of liquid from around the base of the beak, which finds its way into the puncture.

Professor Locy has traced this to a pair of glands in the head of the giant water bug. Their secretion

FROM ALL POINTS

A NOVEL SIGHT.

Oring to the heavy rains recently and the rapid the in the Wabash River many farmers in the bottoms were unable to finish gathering their corn, and the of the novel sights on the McFadden farm in lynn Township is to see Nick McFadden out daily in his rubber hunting boots, with water almost up to his hips, gathering corn, while one of his farmhands is driving the horses hitched to the wagon.

WILD MAN TRIED TO EVADE HAIRCUTTING

Peter Bornato, of Sandusky, Ohio, wild man, squealed and squirmed while being shorn of shaggy locks and matted beard of raven-like hue. However, Sheriff C. Jay Perry and two deputies held him while a barber plied shears and razor, and when the ordeal was over Bornato did not know himself.

"We're taking no chances on getting the cooties

in this jail," said the sheriff.

Bornato, thinly and poorly clad, was brought to the jail by farmers living in the vicinity of Castalia, who, with their households, had become alarmed by his presence, after he had been captured in a woods at the end of a lively chase.

Bornato refuses to talk. In fact, the sheriff is uncertain as to the name by which he is booked, having decided that several wheezes emitted when the stranger was questioned sounded like Bornato more than anything else. So the booking was made accordingly. The sheriff is of the opinion that the man escaped from some insane asylum, probably the Toledo State Hospital.

BOARDER SUES FOR HIS WOODEN LEG

"Peg" Craft, of Dallas, Tex., has lost his wooden leg and is hobbling about the streets on crutches until the course of the law decides whether he will ever get his leg back and how much money he is entitled to by reason of the loss of his wooden member. It appears that "Peg" got behind with his room rent, and one night while he was dreaming of better days his landlady entered his room and took the nether extremity which stood in the corner. The next morning when "Peg" raised a row about some one wiping his leg the landlady told him she had it and would keep it until he paid his room rent. The i keeping it now and "Peg" has moved to another place.

Bu 'P g" is determined to get that leg—a dependof hickory. He has worn it for fifteen and does not intend to give it up without a proper. He has charged the landlady with conof per onal property and is suing her for hile he struggles about the streets on a

chesp emich.

In his suit for damages "Peg" declares that because of his leg being held at the home of his former landlady he suffers mental anguish and that he was physically injured when his crutch caught in the pavement and threw him down. Further, he declares that he cannot earn his living in his usual manner. He is asking for \$500 actual damages and \$500 exemplary damages. He also wants his doctor bill paid—the one incurred when he fell on the hard pavement.

BANK NOTES.

The Bank of England note is about five by eight inches in dimensions, and is printed in black ink, on Irish linen, water-lined paper, plain white, and with ragged edges.

The notes of the Banque de France are made of white water-lined paper, printed in blue and black, with numerous mythological and allegorical pictures, and running in denomination from the twen-

ty-franc note to the one-thousand franc.

South American currency, in most countries, is about the size and general appearance of United States bills, except that cinnamon, brown, and state blue are the prevailing colors, and the Spanish and Portuguese are the prevailing languages engraved on the face.

The German currency is rather artistic. The bills are printed in green and black, and run in denominations from five to one thousand marks. The latter bills are printed on silk fibre paper.

The Chinese paper currency is in red, and yellow paper, with gilt lettering and gorgeous little hand-drawn devices. The bills, to the ordinary financier, might pass for washing bills, but they are worth good money in the "Flowery Kingdom."

Italian notes are of all sizes, shapes and colors. The smaller bills—five and ten-lire notes—are printed on white paper in pink, blue and carmine inks, and ornamented with a finely engraved vig-

nette of King Humbert.

The one-hundred-rouble note of Russia is barred from top to bottom with all the colors of the rainbow blended, as when shown through a prism. In the center, in bold relief, stands a large, finely executed vignette of the Empress Catherine I. This is in black. The other engraving is not at all intricate or elaborate, but it is well done in dark and light brown and black inks.

The Austrian note is printed on light-colored, thick paper, which shows none of the silk fibre marks or geometrical lines used in ordinary paper currency as a protection against counterfeiting. Each bears upon it a terrible warning to counterfeiters, threatening imprisonment "to any one who shall make, sell, or have in possession any counterfeit or facsimile of this bill."

AFTER BLACK DIAMONDS

THE BOYS OF COAL SHAFT NO. 3

By WILLIAM WADE

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER IV (Continued).

Kitt,'s hand bore to him an extra pressure as she shook hands with the boy, and they bade each other good-night, Bob's mother first sking Mrs. Green if they would not stay over night with her.

Mrs. Green thanked the woman for the kindness, but said she would prefer remaining in her own

The crowd dispersed, and the boys stood on the corner for some time, talking of the fire and what it had done.

"Gee, Jim! Don't you know that if you hadn't come through that window when you did I'd have been suffocated? That smoke didn't look bad to you, but it was fearful!" said Robert to his chum.

"I know it was bad, but I didn't have the least idea that you were nailed down like that or I'd have

been through before that."

"Before that! Why, old man, you couldn't have got through there! That fire was raising merry old Cain about that window! If the fire department had not reached there the whole house would have gone, and I'd been gone with it."

Jim shuddered as he thought of the chance which

his chum stood.

"But, Bob, you oughtn't to have taken the chance on that roof!

"I know that, Jim, but great Lordy! Mrs. Green's stuff was in there, and they haven't any too much of this world's goods, what with the old man, her father, drinking up all he digs out of the shaft."

"It is a shame the way the old fellow drinks!" nodded Jim Norcross. "I wish there was some way to make him guit that. His wife is one of the finest women in this town, and Kitty—Kitty's a darling!

Bob looked sharply at Jim, and then smiled weakly as he thought of the expression which his chum had

put into those words.

"You're right, old man, she's a darling.

don't you call on her once in a while, Jim?"

"Who, me? Say, Bob, do you mean that?" as if he had been thinking of such a thing and only wanted an expression of opinion.

"Of course, I mean it! Do you think I'm stand-

ing here and jollying with you about it?"

"By jingoes, I believe I'll do it! I wonder if she'd stand for me.

"She ought to stand for you. You're one of the hardest working fellows at old No. 3, and I don't know any of your bad habits. Surely I ought to, for I've known you for a year."

Jim stood silent for a few moments, looking to-

ward the ground and kicking his shoe into the soft earth nervously.

"One bronze coin of the realm for your thoughts Jim," suddenly spoke Robert Newton, taking the young fellow by the shoulder.

"Nothing in particular, Bob," absently answered

young Norcross.

"Jim," and Bob squarely faced in front of his chum, "there is something in particular, and you're not being square with me. You know what it is, and so do I!" as he nodded his head back at the burned house.

In the dim light of the distant arc Bob saw the face of Jim Norcross go suddenly crimson and he tried to laugh it off, but the laugh was weak.

"It's all right, old man, and I want to help, if you'll need any help, though I don't think you will. You ought to fight your own little game out and win."

Bob placed his arms about the shoulders of his chum and they started off down the side street to where they lived, Jim around the corner from Robert Newton.

"Well, let's get to bed, Jim," said Bob, as they reached the gate. "It's mighty late for both of us to be out. Seven o'clock is work, you know!"

So the boys parted, Bob walking into the house and finding that his mother had already gone to bed.

When the whistle blew for work in the morning at seven-thirty Jim Norcross was standing beside Robert Newton at the mouth of the shaft, waiting for the next elevator to take them down.

They worked all day in the far west end of the main entry leading in that direction, and at the regular hour laid down their tools and started for the top.

Out there a great many men were standing about, talking over various matters, their work during the day, the accidents or incidents with which they had been connected, the weighing trouble, and other things,

Jim and Bob walked off the elevator and started for the path leading toward the north, past the main offices of the Rocksbury Coal Company, when a voice called from the door:

"Bob! Oh, Newton! Come over here!"

The two young men turned to see whence and from whom came the voice. At the same time other miners saw the man-Merlin, operator of the coal mine.

He was a portly man, of about fifty years, stalwart at one time, perhaps, but a little fat from years of no exercise.

His mutton-chop whiskers poked out on the sides and made him a picture of the much caricatured capitalist.

"Come in a few minutes, Bob, I want to talk with you," he said, as the boy approached the office door.

(To be continued.)

INTERESTING ARTICIES

CIGARETTE SMOKING ON THE INCREASE. | tized needle suspended on a thread, so as to give Thirty-nine billion cigarettes were produced in the United States last year, and so far as the Department of Agriculture has been able to ascertain, practically all will be used in this country, as few will be exported. This represents, the department reported, four times as many cigarettes as were produced seven years ago.

Consumption of tobacco in other forms decreased slightly last year, due largely to higher prices. Last year 625,000,000 pounds of leaf tobacco were used in manufacturing compared with 658,000,000 in

1917.

A LUCKY FIND.

A famous silvertip bear, the largest in Colorado, has at last been run to his lair, and in the finding of the long-sought animal there was discovered, through the bear itself, silver deposits of fabulous richness and extent, according to "Jack" Lynch, a resident of Eagle, Colo. Lynch, a prospector, seeking ore similar to that recently found in the Lady Belle Mine, near Eagle, which assayed 1,000 ounces to the ton, ran across the bear at the head of Brush Creek and raised his rifle. The animal seemed to realize that he was about to be shot and began a "bear dance" that made it difficult for Lynch to get true aim. Finally, Lynch was seized with game ague. The huge bear made for a narrow pass, and Lynch followed. Bruin entered a cave high on the side of Horse Mountain, and Lynch sat down to gain heart to shoot the bear when it issued from the hole. He picked up some rocks to toss about and was immediately struck by their weight. Examination and assaying proved the ore to be very rich in silver.

GREAT ANTIQUITY OF MARINERS' COMPASS.

Ancient Chinese records would seem to give the use of the magnetic needle for determining direction a long and varied history. The principle of the compass, or as the Chinese call it, the south-pointing chariot, is stated by Chinese and foreign authorities alike to have been discovered during the reign of Chong Wang, 1115-1079 B. C. The discovery ras forgotten in a few hundred years. Then the philosopher Chang Hong, who died in 139 B. C., econ tructed the device. In succeeding troubles min model was lost and forgotten. From the third full tury A. D. onward great interest was shown by the (hine e sages in the allusions in old writings to me my terious south-pointing chariot. Attempt and erettempt was made to solve the riddle, and then read in writings of the eleventh century of the compass being in use by mariners.

The Chinese outh-pointing chariot was a magne-

freedom to its north and south prepensities. It seems not to have been used by the Chinese for navigation, but solely as an instrument for geographers. It is probable that the Chinese junk captains of early days found it a needless luxury in their shore hugging and river navigation.

HIS PIG DIED.

Thousands of youngsters throughout the country who, with no thought for the worries that come to those seeking to raise live stock, joined pig clubs and acquired in exchange for the promise to pay \$10 a squealing young porker, have now arrived in the day of accounting. The notes given in exchange for the pigs matured on December 1, and the organizations which fostered the movement have been having some trouble in collecting.

Many of those youngsters entirely overlooked the fact that there is a death rate among pigs, and some of them are faced by the necessity of paying for a pig which some time ago ceased to be of any use and which because of its natural rather than artificial death was worth less than nothing as pork. club officials, however, report that comparatively few of the pigs died.

One embyro pig farmer when he received a request from the holders of the notes to pay \$10 with a six month's interest that came to thirty cents submitted his views on the entire matter in a letter to the pig club.

"I bought a pig from the teacher," he wrote, "and had till the first of December to pay it, and I'm going to pay it on the twenty-ninth. And you didn't tell us we had to pay interest. When we bought the pig she had a cold and she coughed till she died. You came and saw the pig only once, and you told us you would come and see the pig again, and though our pig has since died, we are going pay you just the same. And we are going to pay it to the teacher. You didn't mention any bank and we are going to pay it where we bought it."

Many of the young pork farmers paid cash for the pigs, and it is said that the trouble that has arisen from trying to collect notes is not due to any unwillingness on the part of the youngsters to pay, but rather through the fact that in the excitement of caring for their live stock they had forgotten when the notes would come due.

It is expected that the sending of bills to the pig raisers will cause wholesale slaughtering of porkers in sections where there are pig clubs. To many the slaughterings will bring a fair return on the investment, and it is said that in spite of the advent of peace the clubs will be continued next year.

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 19, 1919.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

Full citizenship was conferred on 162,402 soldiers and sailors of the United States army and navy up to January 1 under the act of May 9, 1918, which so amended the naturalization laws as to authorize the granting of citizenship to friendly aliens who had served a full enlistment in the military or naval service of the United States or had complied with certain legal requirements as to formal declaration of intention to become citizens of the United States. The figures were announced in a report from the Bureau of Naturalization, dated January 8, 1919.

A sturgeon weighing 300 pounds was caught in the Hudson River off Shad Island at Albany recently. There was a time when this fish was so plentiful in the upper reaches of the Hudson that it was familiarly known as "Albany beef." Through lack of proper protection the sturgeon was turned away from its spawning grounds. Today this fish, thanks to the alertness of the Forest, Fish and Game Commissioner, is being permitted to make its spring pilgrimage for the purpose of propagating its kind. In time folk thereabout may again be able to secure a plentiful supply of "Albany beef" in season for moderate prices.

They had quite exciting times at the home of Elmer Dare, in Harmony, Me., recently. The place was visited by spirits, hobgoblins, or some other obnoxious unearthly creatures. The family was awakened in the night by cider and vinegar barrels being rolled over in the cellar, doors slamming, chairs tipped over and other noises too numerous to mention. The neighbors were called in by telephone and watched all night, but failed to locate the cause of the disturbance. The next three nights the same mysterious doings were repeated and several windows were broken. Although there was a bright moon and several men watched the place they failed to discover any cause for the unusual commotion.

A large bear made its appearance in the pasture of Masahoro, Soyo, Kitami Province, in Japan, and attacked a three-year-old bull which was munching grass. The pair fought to the death—of the bull. Two other bulls which were separately roaming about the pasture were attracted by the struggle, and as soon as their mate was killed, sprang upon the bear with their united strength. A desperate fight ensued for some time, but unfortunately resulted in the fall of the two revenging companions after having sustained severe wounds from the paws of the wild animal. The triumphant monster then took the first bull in his grip and disappeared into the valley, leaving his telltale footprints in the soft earth.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

"Here's a man went around the world without tipping." "That's the only way to work it. You don't have to back over the same route."

"Did your uncle remember you when he came to make his will?" "Yes; he remembered me so well that he left my name out altogether."

Mrs. Skinnum—Why are you all hiding from Tommy? Little Lizzie—We are playing "grown-ups," and Tommy is the butcher come with his bill.

Anxious Mistress—Jane, have you given the fish any fresh water lately? Jane—No, mum. They haven't drunk the water I gave them last month yet.

"What is the best way to develop an appetite?" asked the old fogy. "Being without the price of a meal is the best way I know of," replied the wise guy.

"Well, Tommy, is arithmetic easy for you this year?" Tommy—Yes'm. "Is it because you have a new teacher?" Tommy—No, ma'am; it's 'cause I ain't got 'rithmetic.

Mother-in-law—The doctor-said I was all rundown and needed strychnine as a tonic. Now, I don't want to take too much. How big a dose do you recommend? Son-in-law (hopefully)—I wouldn't take more than a gallon to begin with.

"Eather," said little Danny Grogan, "why dooze they have the electric-light wires covered wit' rubber?" "Oi am soorprised at your ignorance," said Mr. Grogan, in answer. "They do be covered so that the light cannot lake out ay um."

Herbert (with his history book)—Papa, what is the Appian Way? Papa—I suppose it was a way Appian had, though I don't know much about him personally.

LUCKY JOE BROWN

---OR----

THE SMARTEST BOY IN NEW YORK

By J. P. RICHARDS

(A serial story)

CHAPTER V (Continued).

If he liked Mr. Lowden's looks, Joe had intended to confide in him, but he did not take to the man at all.

Satisfied now that all the white glittering stones in his wonderful collection were diamonds, Joe got his thinkers at work again.

There seemed to him just two ways of getting around the problem.

One was to take his find to some police station and turn it over; the other to try to see Mr. Henriques, the husband of the woman who had been robbed.

Joe rejected the first offhand.

"They will surely hold me as well as the jewelry," he said to himself, "and, anyway, if I do that I shall lose the reward."

The newspaper account had described Mr. Henriques as a banker on Wall street.

Joe inquired his way to Wall street, and located the place.

The banking offices of Henriques & Co. were on the second floor of an enormous building.

Joe looked in through the glass door, and saw that the main office was very elegantly furnished, and contained an army of clerks.

"I can never get at that big man by just going in and asking to see him," he said to himself. "How shall I manage it?"

He walked back towards the Astor House, thinking, and by the time he reached it his mind was made up.

"I'll write him a letter," he said to himself. "That will be given to him, and I think it will interest him all right."

He got paper and an envelope at the desk, and going into the hotel writing room he penned the lowing missive, which we consider pretty cleverly worded for a country boy of eighteen:

"Astor House, Sept. 10, 19—.

'. Ir. T. F. Henriques:

Dear Sir.—The writer by a singular accident he will explain to you personally, came last put into the possession of certain valuable jew-line from in the paper an account of the robbery with home, he feels that there is strong reason that the e goods are some if not all of goods. If you will grant me an interview

I will show you a few of the pieces, and will, if you wish, take you where you can see the rest.

"Yours truly,

"JOSEPH BROWN.

"Of Little Indian, Schoharie Co., N. Y."

Joe put in the last line with the idea of showing Mr. Henriques that he was no city fakir, and also to help him out in his explanation later on.

"It will be certain to attract his attention," he reasoned. "It will show him that I am no cheap crook."

He then took his dress-suit case upstairs again and selected several rings, a necklace which appeared to be made of many pearls, and the diamond coronet.

With these articles stowed away in his pockets, Joe checked the suit-case again, and started for Wall street.

He grew more nervous with each step he took.

What if Mr. Henriques should detain him, call in a policeman, and have him arrested? he kept asking himself.

But he determined to go ahead, hit or miss.

It was now almost ten o'clock, and Joe had chosen a very good time for his interview with the banker, for as a matter of fact the tall, stylish looking gentleman who entered the office just ahead of him was none other than the banker himself.

Joe went to one of the openings in the brass railing and handed his letter to a clerk.

"Will you please give that to Mr. Henriques?" he said. "It is very important and I am to wait for an answer."

The clerk took the letter, called a boy and turned it over to him without even replying.

About five minutes later the boy came along outside the railing.

"Mr. Henriques wants to see you," he said. "Come this way."

Now this was the time when an ordinary boy would have allowed his nervousness to get the best of him.

Joe did nothing of the sort.

Quite the contrary, that was the moment when all nervousness seemed to leave him.

As he felt just then Joe could have faced the president of the United States.

He was ushered into an elegantly furnished private office, where at a handsome roll-top desk sat the gentleman who had passed him in the hall.

The man eyed him keenly, and Joe returned his steady gaze.

"You wanted to see me," said Mr. Henriques, taking up Joe's letter. "What is the meaning of this?"

"It means precisely what it says, sir," replied Joe.

"Show me what you have got."

" beg your pardon, sir. If you will permit me to tell how I found——"

"Show me what you have got!"

The man's manner was rude and dictatorial.

(To be continued.)

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

Martin McKee, a coal miner of Springfield, Ill., may well be termed the champion pickle eater in the world. On a wager he devoured twenty-five of the appetizers in one sitting and won \$5. They were of the large sized

WATCHING FOR TREASURE

twelve and one-half pounds.

variety and in all weighed

Capt. Kidd's supposed treasures along the New England and Long Island coasts have a parallel in the anthracite coal banks of the Lehigh field, in Pennsylvania. Several huge culm piles, reported to contain buried chests of money stolen nearly fifty years ago in nearby villages are being run through washeries at Drifton and Yorktown. Close watch is kept by the workmen as the stuff is put through the screens and chutes, but nothing has been discovered except the bones of mules.

HASTE LOST A PRISONER

William Vaughn, who escaped

EATS 12 LBS. OF PICKLES | back. They had just time, by sprinting, to catch an outgoing Illinois Central train back to the prison. "Shake a leg," called the sheriff to his prisoner, and by his speed the sheriff caught it. Maybe Vaughn couldn't run fast. A few hours later the detective bureau received a telegram from the sheriff, the purport of which was "catch him again."

DOESN'T LIKE GERMANS

Refusing to live longer in Lincoln Township, Douglas County, ! South Dakota, because it is populated almost exclusively with persons of German birth or descent, William McMahon, a farmer of the township, announces that he has sold his farm in "Germany," as he terms the township, and will locate where the English language is spoken. McMahon has felt lonely since the election in November. When the vote was counted in Lincoln Township it was found that he had cast the only Republican vote and that all other electors in the township recently from the Missouri State had voted the Non-Partisan Penitentiary, was recaptured in League ticket, which is alleged Chicago, and Sheriff Owens, of to have been backed by every Boonville, Mo., came to take him German and pro-German.

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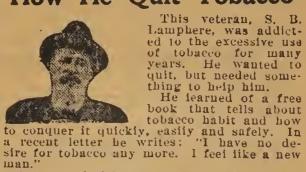
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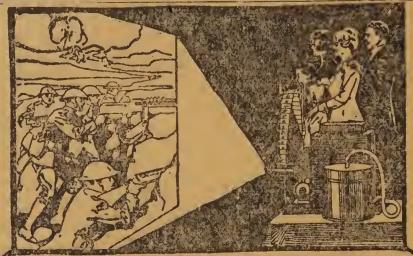
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